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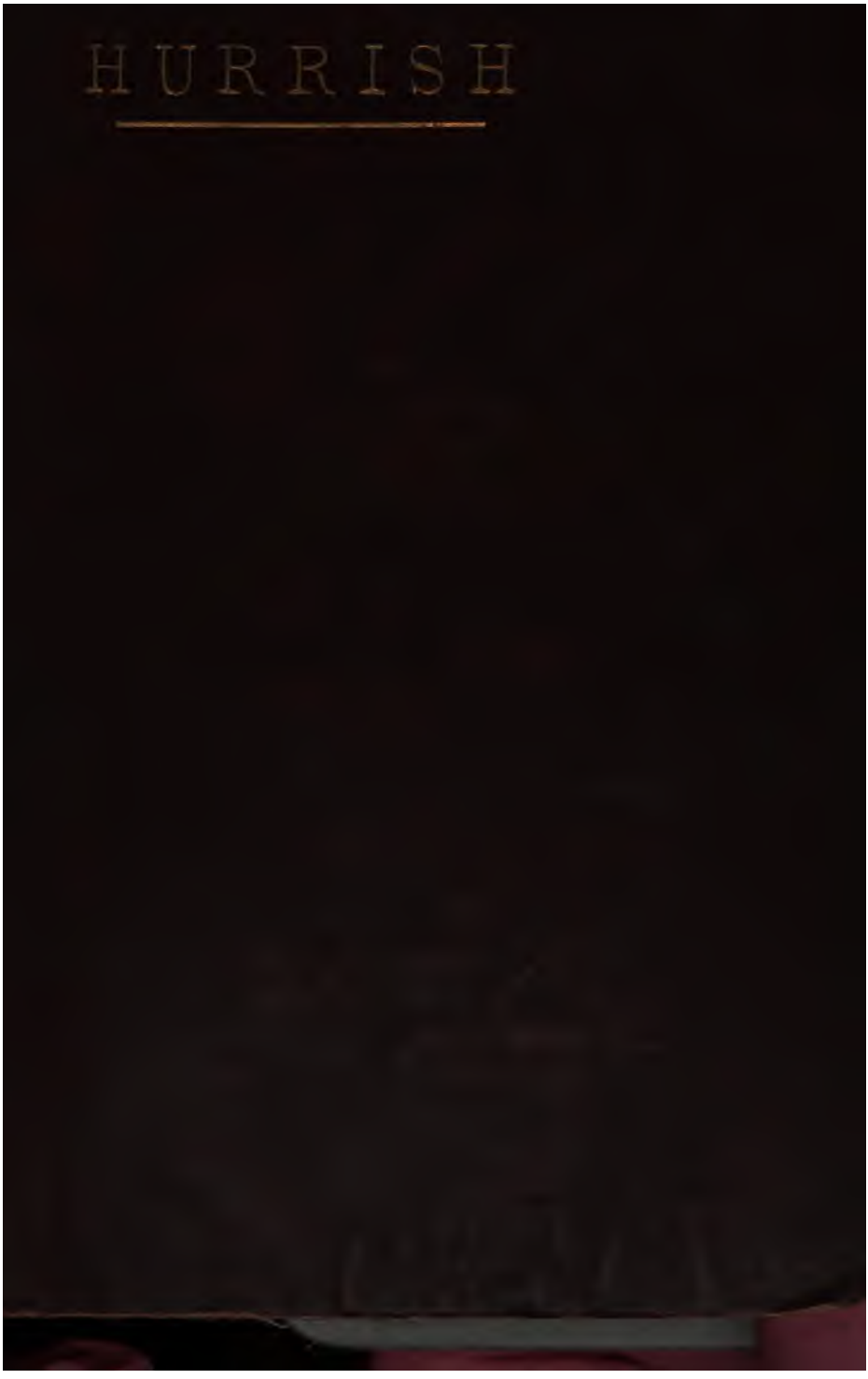
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HURRISH

A STUDY

BY

THE HON. EMILY LAWLESS

AUTHOR OF 'A CHELSEA HOUSEHOLDER,'
'A MILLIONAIRE'S COUSIN'

THIRD EDITION

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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WITH A GREAT DEAL OF ADMIRATION

AND MORE AFFECTION,

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ITS AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	AN IRON LAND,	1
II.	HURRISH SUSPECTS THE UNSEEN POWERS,	20
III.	THE UNSEEN POWERS STAND REVEALED,	31
IV.	INTRODUCES THE READER TO A FOOL AND A PHILOSOPHER,	37
V.	AN ENLIGHTENED VARIETY OF PATRIOTISM,	53
VI.	MR O'BRIEN OF DONORE,	66
VII.	MAURICE IS HURT BY ALLEY'S INGRATITUDE,	85
VIII.	THE BREATH OF CELTIC ELOQUENCE,	98
IX.	AN UGLY NEIGHBOUR,	106
X.	HURRISH'S CRIME,	118
XI.	ALLEY'S PUNISHMENT,	136
XII.	"HOW CUD HE BE THERE, AN' HE DEAD?"	149
XIII.	IN GORTNACOPPIN VALLEY,	162
XIV.	MAURICE'S NIGHT THOUGHTS,	175
XV.	ALLEY'S NIGHT THOUGHTS,	185

XVI. THE ROAD TO JAIL, ... 196
XVII. MR THOMOND O'BRIEN UPON THE REQUIREMENTS OF IRELAND, ... 206
XVIII. MAURICE TRIUMPHS OVER ALL HIS ENEMIES, . 220
XIX. TEAMPULL A PHOILL, ... 233
XX. IN THE COURT-HOUSE AT ENNIS, . . . 248
XXI. SUNDAY IN THE BURREN, ... 262
XXII. A FLASH IN THE DARK, ... 271
XXIII. THE WRONG SALEEN, ... 282
XXIV. HURRISH SEES THE DEATH SPER'RT, . . 291
XXV. UPON THE VERY BRINK, ... 301
XXVI. SOME PRECURSORS OF THE MILLENNIUM, . 312
XXVII. FACE TO FACE, ... 322
XXVIII. "FOR I ALLAYS SAID HE'D BE A GRAN' MAN," 331
CONCLUSION, ... 338

HURRISH: A STUDY.

CHAPTER I.

AN IRON LAND.

WILDER regions there are few to be found, even in the wildest west of Ireland, than that portion of north Clare known to its inhabitants as "The Burren." Seen from the Atlantic, which washes its western base, it presents to the eye a succession of low hills, singularly grey in tone,—deepening often, towards evening, into violet or dull reddish plum colour—sometimes, after sunset, to a pale ghostly iridescence. They are quite low these hills — not above a thousand feet at their highest point, and for the most part considerably less. Hills of this height, whatever their other merits, seldom attain to the distinction of being spoken of as "grand." Their character is essentially "mutton-suggesting." You picture them dotted over with flocks of sheep, which nibble the short sweet grass, and frisk in their idle youth over the little declivities. If here and there

a rib or so of rock protrudes, they merely seem to be foils to the general smoothness. But these Burren hills are literally not clothed at all. They are startlingly, I may say scandalously, naked. From their base up to the battered turret of rock which serves as a summit, not a patch, not a streak, not an indication even, of green is often to be found in the whole extent. On others a thin sprinkling of grass struggles upward for a few hundred feet, and in valleys and hollows, where the washings of the rocks have accumulated, a grass grows, famous all over cattle-feeding Ireland for its powers of fattening. So, too, in the long vertical rifts or fissures which everywhere cross and recross its surface, maiden-hair ferns and small tender-petalled flowers unfurl, out of reach of the cruel blasts. These do not, however, affect the general impression, which is that of nakedness personified—not comparative, but absolute. The rocks are not scattered over the surface, as in other stony tracts, but the whole surface is rock. They are not hills, in fact, but skeletons—rain-worn, time-worn, wind-worn,—starvation made visible, and embodied in a landscape.

And these strange little hills have had an equally strange history. They were the last home and the last standing-ground of a race whose very names have become a matter of more or less ingenious guess-work. Formorians? Firbolgs? Tuatha da Danaans? Who were they, and what were they? We know nothing, and apparently are not destined to know anything. They came—we know not whence, and they vanished—to all appearance into the Atlantic; pushed westward, like the Norwegian lemming, until,

like that most unaccountable of little animals, they, too, sprang into the waves and were lost. Little change has taken place in the aspect of the region since those unknown races passed away. Their great stone-duns are even still in many places the largest buildings to be seen,—the little oratories and churches which succeeded them having become in their turn, with hardly an exception, ruins like themselves, their very sites forgotten, melted into the surrounding stoniness. The Burren is not—in all probability never will be—a tourist-haunt, but for the few who know it, it has a place apart, a distinct personality—strange, remote, indescribable. Everything that the eye rests on tells us that we are on one of the last standpoints of an old world, worn out with its own profusion, and reduced here to the barest elements. Mother Earth, once young, buxom, frolicsome, is here a wrinkled woman, sitting alone in the evening of her days, and looking with melancholy eyes at the sunset.

The valley of Gortnacoppin is a sort of embodiment of the Burren. Standing in it you might fairly believe yourself in the heart of some alpine region, high above the haunts of men, where only the eagle or the marmot make their homes. All the suggestions are alpine, some of them almost arctic. The white stream cutting its way through the heaped-up drift; the water churning and frothing hither and thither in its impatience, and leaving a white deposit upon all the reeds and stones; the pallid greyish-green vegetation, with here and there a bit of dazzling red or orange; the chips and flakes of rock which lie strewn about; the larger stones and boulders

toppled down from the cliff above, and lying heaped one over the other in the bed of the stream,—many of the latter, you may perceive, have not long fallen, for their edges are still unweathered. Here and there over the top and sides of the drift a little thin grass has spread itself, through which trenches have been torn, showing the earth and stones below. Truly a grim scene!—suggestive of nothing so much as one of those ugly little early German prints, where every stick and stone seems to be grimacing with unpleasant intention. Only look hard enough at any of the rocks, and you will assuredly see a gnome appear!

Towards the bottom, where it approaches the sea, this valley, however, expands, and becomes an irregular lake-like circle, mapped out into small fields, separated from one another by tottering lace-work walls. After following the downward course of the upper valley, you would have been surprised at the sudden fertility of this little space, the greenness of the grass, the promising look of the small crops of bottle-green potatoes. If something of a geologist, however, you would have suspected that the mass of detritus, borne down from the hills, and spread abroad here at their feet, had something to say to that satisfactory result.

Between five and six years ago the greater part of this little fertile oasis was rented by Horatio, or, as he was less classically called by his neighbours, Hurrish O'Brien, one of the countless O'Briens of Clare. His cabin—a rather large one, built of stone and thatched—stood upon the summit of a little ridge, conspicuous, like a small fly upon a large window-pane, in the absence of any other building; rendered

still more so by a good-sized ash-tree, which stood upon the ridge beside it—a noticeable distinction in so leafless a district.

It was a warm morning late in May, and even the stony Burren had begun to feel a touch of spring, its ferns and little delicate-petalled blossoms to reach out inquiring heads over their stony prisons. Hurrish had just returned to breakfast. He had been down early to the sea, to set some fishing-lines—for, like most of the inhabitants of that amphibious part of the island, he was part farmer and part fisherman,—perhaps it would be more accurate in his case to say three-parts farmer to one-part fisherman, the latter vocation being, in fact, rather a matter of "intertainmint" than profit.

The door of the cabin was open, and the window unshuttered (the latter for an excellent reason, there were no shutters), yet the cabin itself was lit by its fire. The light, spreading from the blazing turf, broke in red flakes upon the bare rafters of the roof, upon the roughly plastered walls, upon a quantity of highly coloured pious prints upon the walls, upon others of a less pious character pinned beside them, upon a rough white terrier, two solemn black pigs, and three children scattered over the mud floor, upon an *omnium gatherum* of tags and rags, stray fragments of furniture, tools, clothing, straw, bedding, sacks, heaps of potatoes,—an indescribable and incalculable collection of long accumulated rubbish, huddled, in more or less picturesque confusion, one on top of another—the sort of picturesqueness which fastidious people prefer in its painted rather than in its actual form!

Hurrish sat upon a low "creepy" stool, with a

huge mug of stirabout (known to the ignorant as porridge) upon his knees, which he was shovelling down his throat by the aid of a large iron spoon. A broad-shouldered, loose-limbed, genial-faced giant was Hurrish, such as these western Irish counties occasionally breed. Irish in every feature, look, and gesture, there was yet a smack of something foreign about him, to be accounted for possibly by that oft-quoted admixture of Spanish blood, the result of bygone centuries of more or less continuous intercourse. His hair was black as a cormorant's wing, and curly under the old felt hat, half of whose brim had vanished in some distant engagement; his beard was curly too, and black, yet his eyes were grey, his skin evidently originally fair, and his expression open, good-humoured, irresolute, with a spice of native fun and jollity about it. Despite the jollity which was its prevailing expression, he did not seem to be altogether a contented giant. There were lines of perplexity and disturbance here and there discernible. Yet Hurrish O'Brien was a well-to-do man. He had a good stock of cows and calves; he held his farm on a moderate rental; his wife had brought him fifty gold sovereigns tied up in a pocket-handkerchief; his children were strong and healthy; and he was regarded by his neighbours generally as one of the "warmest" men between Blackhead and the mouth of the Shannon.

Opposite, upon another low creepy-stool, sat his mother, Bridget O'Brien, engaged in stirring a steaming black pot—an employment which would have given a sensitive looker-on a delightful thrill, so appropriate was the operation to the operator. In Bridget O'Brien the Southern type was also strongly

visible. Women like her—as gaunt, as wrinkled, as black-browed, as witch-like—may be seen seated upon thousands of doorsteps all over the Spanish peninsula. It is not a very comfortable type, one would think, for everyday domestic use; too suggestive of an elderly bird of prey—a vulture, old, yet with claws ever upon the watch to tear, and a beak which yearns to plunge itself into the still palpitating flesh. Her eyes were black—a wicked black—and bright still amid the multiplicity of wrinkles which surrounded them, as cracks a half-dried pool. Her hair, too, was dark, and hung in heavy hanks about her forehead, reaching nearly to the grizzled eyebrows, projecting like unclipped eaves over her eyes.

Bridget O'Brien was an ardent patriot! The latest tide of revolutionary sentiment had begun to spread its waves even to the heart of remotest Burren, and she was the chief recipient of it in the O'Brien household. It was she who knew when, where, how, and why the latest agrarian outrage had been committed, and was the first to raise the war-cry of triumph and exultation upon these joyful occasions. Not that the rest of the family were backward in their degree. Hurrish had called himself a Fenian almost ever since he could remember, and nothing but his distance from the seat of war had prevented him from striking a blow when that ill-starred apology for a rebellion came to its final and melancholy close. Animosity against England was a creed with him, a sort of shibboleth—something like the middle-class English hatred of France some three-quarters of a century ago. His belief in its wickedness and atrocities was a belief that knew absolutely no mis-

givings. Had he been assured that, like Herod of old, an order had just been issued by its Government for all infants under two years of age to be slaughtered, I doubt if it would have struck him as at all incredible, or even out of character with what he supposed to be the normal nature of its proceedings.

Hurrish's patriotic potations, however, were mild and diluted compared with those quaffed to the very dregs by his mother. He was not a man easily roused to bitterness, and would hardly, I think, have cared to kill even an Englishman, unless some very good purpose could have been served by so doing. When Bridget brought back tales of vengeance, executed upon the latest enemies of their country he listened, but rarely found himself warmed to the point of emulation; the details of those gallant achievements being apt, in fact, to have rather a chilling and discouraging effect upon his imagination. What he enjoyed was what may be called the frivolous side of patriotism,—the mere noise, the crowd, the excitement, the waving flags, the new tin-pikes, the thrilling, delightful, inexhaustible oratory of his chosen leaders. All this was meat, drink, and clothing to him, and he would have walked thirty miles any day of his life to enjoy it. On the other hand, the detailed projects of vengeance were apt to pass over his head. He admitted their necessity, but blinked the details. When Ned Clancy, for instance, with his wife and four small children, were turned out of their cabin in the dead of a January night, because Clancy had taken Lynch's farm, contrary to well-known if unwritten local laws, Hurrish had been disposed to feel sorry for the more

juvenile of the criminals. Not so his mother. "What ailed he to be pityin' of thim? wasn't it known they wouldn't have been sarved so if they hadn't been desarvin'?" that thorough-going woman asked fiercely Hideous prints, of still more hideous significance, disfigured a considerable portion of the cabin walls. There was one cheerful design in particular, representing the roasting alive of men in swallow-tail coats, tall hats, and white neck-cloths, presumably landlords and their myrmidons. The intention was allegorical, probably, but to Bridget it was literal enough, and it was upon such pabulum she feasted her eyes with all the relish of a petticoated vampire.

Poor little Alley Sheehan, Hurrish's niece by marriage, could not so much as bear to look at the side of the wall where these prints hung, and averted her eyes whenever she happened to approach them. They made her feel cold and sick. She was too much afraid of old Bridget, however, to show this repugnance openly, for Bridget was a domestic despot, and not by any means one of the benevolent variety. There was no blood tie between them, either, to soften the yoke. When Alley's mother died, Hurrish and his wife had taken her to live with them out of sheer charity and kindness of heart. When poor Mary O'Brien in her turn died, old Bridget would willingly have turned Alley out upon the cold highroad to beg. There were points, however, where Hurrish, yielding as he was, could hold his own, and this was one of them. He had a very tender spot in his heart for little Alley, whose great grey eyes it was hard to meet without

softening. They were wonderful eyes, such as are only to be seen in their perfection west of the Shannon,—violet grey, with lashes which fell in a straight black drift upon the cheek below,—eyes with a rippling light and shade in the irises, such as streams show when flowing clear over a pebbly bottom. The face, too, which went with them, suited the eyes, which is by no means invariably the case, especially in Ireland.

For all her eyes, Alley counted for very little in the estimation of her contemporaries. The average young Irish male is not perhaps a particularly discriminating animal, and the finer points are apt to be undiscernible by him. Hers was the sort of beauty which needs indeed some eye-culture to appreciate, a beauty which clings with peculiar tenacity to the inward vision after the outward presentment has faded, which no rags, no dirt, no circumstances, however repellent, avail to spoil—nay, which seem to bloom the brighter for such accessories, as the peculiar blue of a speedwell shines best on that discarded heap of refuse where we grudge yet delight to see it. There was a touch of ascetic dreaminess about her which suited her stony environment, and remotely suggested the cloister—a sort of nun-like fragility and separateness. Yet Alley was not really delicate. She could carry her creel of turf or her can of butter-milk as long and as lightly as any girl in the Burren. Her small shapely brown feet could tramp unwearedly a long summer's day over the stones. Those beautiful pathetic eyes of hers had never known the shelter of a hat or a bonnet in all their days. Strange flower of humanity, a very

young girl's beauty! Springing we hardly know whence; dropped often where it seems least to tell; with something pathetic about it always, and most of all where so few years seem bound, as in a case like this, to bring it to an end.

The party in the cabin had been silent while the work of breakfast went steadily on. A ray of sunshine—the pallid ineffectual sunshine of the far, far west—was making its way across the floor, and disputing the ground with the paling light from the turf. Through the open doorway they could see the little hollow below, looking like a green saucer upon a grey floor. The drills of potatoes were appearing in dark-green jagged rows between the boulders, and over the grey shoulder of the next ridge the long heave of the Atlantic could be heard rising and falling in a slow harmonious cadence.

Alley, with an iron spoon in her hand, was feeding the youngest child, a rosy creature of three, who sat plump upon the ground, its fat bare feet and legs outstretched, and its round red mouth agape, like a young hedge-sparrow, for the mouthful of stirabout. The other two children had finished their breakfast, and were rolling about the floor trying to induce Lep, —short for Leprehaun,—Hurrish's yellow-and-white terrier, to join them—who, however, sat stiff and erect, his eyes intently fixed upon his master, his ugly, honest, mongrel face irradiated with patient adoration. It is rather rare to see any strong symptoms of mutual regard between an Irish peasant and his dog—such as, for instance, links the Scotch shepherd to his collie. The dogs have to take their chance with the pigs, children, and poultry. They

have not the financial value, and therefore dignity, of the first-named, nor the natural claims of the second; neither, again, has kindly nature endowed them with the same convenient capacity for escaping sticks, heels, and other weapons of offence that it has bestowed upon the last. They receive food when there is plenty going; when times are short they are kicked out to seek or steal their dinners as they can. Hurrish, however, was an exception, and his ragged Lep loved him with as deep and adoring a love as ever tender-hearted cur lavished upon indifferent man.

The stillness outside was wonderful, such stillness as could only exist in so depopulated a region—a region where there were no fields to plough, few seeds to be sown, no carriages to drive, and hardly any roads to drive them on; nothing but sea, sky, rocks, cloud,—a stillness that was like death, broken only by the larks, which wheeled and circled overhead, pouring out their heavenly notes over those grey unfriendly rocks in a melodious and interminable cataract.

All at once this death-like silence was violently broken. A shrill cry—the cry of a woman—rang out across the stony stillness, and with one accord every one, even the dog and the children, sprang up and ran to the door. Up the stony slope, at a pace only possible to one accustomed from childhood to that rugged fragment of earth's surface, came a girl. After her in full pursuit followed a man—unwieldy, red-faced, heavy-jawed, brutal — a sort of human orang-outang or Caliban, whose lumbering action and coarse gesture had something grotesque and even

repulsive about them, as it were a parody or perversion of humanity.

Hurrish ran hastily down the slope and met the girl, who clutched frantically at his arm, turning round as she did so to look back at her pursuer, who on his side stopped short upon the platform of rock which he had reached, and remained there bellowing forth indistinct curses and half inarticulate threats of vengeance. Then, like some baffled beast of prey, he turned, and strode sulkily back over the narrow rifts of rocks, his brutish figure—reflected in all its uncouthness upon the wet surfaces as upon a sheet of dulled ice—disappearing a minute later over the next perpendicular descent.

The other two returned to the cabin, where the rest of the party had remained in an excited group around the door. Entering, the girl—a handsome florid creature of twenty or thereabouts—flung herself down with an air of exhaustion upon a stool. It was evident, however, in spite of her first words, that she was not quite so much frightened as she pretended to be.

"'Tis scared I am half to death!" she declared, pantingly. "Alley, darlint, you're whiter nor the driven snow! Bad luck to that baste for scarin' yis. 'Twas drunk he was—mad drunk an' quarrelsome. I was comin' round the corner of Gortnacoppin, thinkin' of nothink 'tall, when all at onst he lep at me from behind of th' ould chapel place, an' swore roight or wrong to kiss me—the ondacent bliggard! I lit out one screech an' run, and he afther me over the racks. Trath, I thought onst I was cotched, but he was too drunk to go stiddy, thanks be to God, and

I heard him stumblin' about like a sale behint ov me. 'Tis a moighty quare way to be coortin' a gurl —scarin' her out ov her raison!" she added, meditatively. "I'll thank ye kindly, Mrs O'Brien, for a sup ov cow's milk. 'Tis parched I am wid the drought."

Sal Connor was the beauty of Tubbamina, and its heiress too. Her father was not long dead, and she, singular to relate, had been his only child. To her belonged the cabin in which she and her mother then lived. Hers were the two fine cows tethered beside it; hers the goats and sheep which fed on the short sweet grass sprouting between the rocks. Needless to say she had had her choice of suitors, the unattractive Caliban who had just been pursuing her being one of them, and the most persevering of the band. By a piece of contrariety, Sal Connor, however, had fixed her heart upon Hurrish O'Brien, who upon his side cared not at all for her. Though a widower, and therefore at a disadvantage, he was the biggest, the strongest, the best-looking, and the best-tempered man in the whole neighbourhood of Tubbamina, and ever since poor Mary O'Brien's death, nearly three years before, Sal had made up her mind to fill that vacant place—a resolve which she by no means confined to her own maidenly bosom. She was a good-hearted girl, and if she married Hurrish, had every intention of making him the best of wives—as wife-hood is understood in the west of Ireland. She would certainly not have felt it incumbent upon her to mend his clothes, or keep his cabin in order; neither would she have desired that the children should learn the use of soap, or go to school, with

the exception, that is, of the elder girls, for whom she would have scraped together money enough to send them to a convent, where they might learn to play the pianoforte, make lead-pencil drawings of surpassing shininess, perhaps even acquire the French language as spoken at Buttevant or Ahascragh,—generally, in short, pick up such accomplishments as were likely to be of most service to them in the sphere of life they were destined to occupy.

Meantime that more advanced stage of the seven ages of womanhood had not yet arrived, and Sal Connor was in the earlier, provocative, coquettish stage of the young hen-pheasant or curassow, who is courted by half-a-dozen aspiring males, only that whereas those ignorant birds go arrayed for the most part in sober greys and browns, leaving the more gorgeous hues for their admirers, Sal delighted all Tubbamina, and Gortnacoppin too, by the splendours of her shawls and petticoats—on Sunday outshining even the painted images in the chapel. Old Bridget favoured Sall, and would willingly have seen her married to Hurrish. The money was the main consideration, of course; but besides this, her own influence with him, she was aware, had been rather waning of late, and a daughter-in-law, whom she could easily, she flattered herself, win over to her way of thinking, would be a prime auxiliary in stirring up that sluggish spirit to greater activity.

"An' what ailed that baste to run after ye to-day, 'cushla?" she inquired curiously. "Was it anythink new, or just th' ould divilmint?"

"Och, I dunno, 'tis jalous, I think, he is. He can't 'bide for me comin' this way 'tall, whativer

the raison is!" with a coy glance under her eyelashes at Hurrish, who was mixing a pot of tar with a bit of stick, and therefore unfortunately unconscious of the tender provocation.

"Bad ind to his soul,—he's the curse ov the counthry!" the old woman growled savagely. "An' if he doesn't be mendin' his manners, he'll be makin' it too hot for him, too, so he will—the bletherin' baste!"

"He's rich, they say," Sal said, in a tone of extenuation. It is never well to run down an admirer overmuch, even if you have no immediate intention of accepting him.

"Rich is it? Bedad, if riches was all, 'tis rich he is an' to spare! Why, the whisky alone he drinks wud float a ship, so 't wud—a ship of war! Ould Mrs Connor—that's Darby Connor's widy—telled me she seen a man comin' up the car-thrack beyant his house wid an ass, an' a barrel on the top ov it wuldn't barely cum in at the door. An' he outs hisself and helps to rowl it in; an' never a dhrop to n'er a one, but sittin', an' swillin', an' a-makin' a baste ov hisself, all *to* hisself—iless maybe that bruther of his does be helpin' him"—with a glance out of her black eyes to where Alley was sitting a little apart, with the youngest child on her lap.

This roused Hurrish.

"Morry never dhrinks a drop, mother—ye know that as well as meself," he said, quietly.

"Trath, I know nothing 'bout it," she answered, angrily.

"Thin I do, an' I tell ye 'tis so. The two is no more 'like nor a garden flower an' my old blackthorn

there. 'Tis the hoight ov wonder to ivery sowl in the warld how they comes to be bruthers 'tall."

"Och, yer allays moighty sot upon yer Morry! Wait till the bruther does be a cuttin' of yer throat, an' him helpin' him for to do it! Maybe ye won't think so moighty much ov him *thin!*"

To this rhetorical thrust Hurrish made no reply, and a silence ensued of several minutes' duration.

"So the poor Maloneys is out 't last!" Sal Connor observed, by way perhaps of giving a new and more agreeable turn to the conversation. "Poor Mrs Maloney! dacent woman! 'Tis a power of trouble she's had first and last. An' who'll be takin' the farm? 'Twud be a hundred ov pities for that gran' ground to go waste. 'Tis the iligantest grazin', they say, in the Burren. 'Twud be moighty convanient for yourself, Mr O'Brien, wudn't it, now?" she added, turning to Hurrish. "So handy to your own; an' you an' the Meejor so frindly, more be token."

This brought Bridget out once more on to the war-path.

"Divil a one will take that farm, not if it was the last bit ov grazin' in all Oirland, an' ivery baste in the warld dyin' for the want ov a bite!" she announced, bringing her closed fist down upon the dresser with a thump that made the crockery jingle. "Whoiver goes in at Mick Maloney's door comes out ov't on his back, and roightly sarved too, an' I'd say the same if it was twinty sons ov me own was attimptin' to do such a thing!"

She looked round the cabin as if to challenge contradiction, but no one responded. Hurrish continued to mix his pot as if nothing in the least affecting him

had been said. Like many mild men blessed with a turbulent womankind, he had long learned to regard these outbursts as part of the everyday order of things, like the roaring of the wind or the crumbling of the turf, and to pay as little attention. He had no more idea of taking the farm from which the Maloneys had just been evicted than he had of taking Dublin Castle, and this his mother knew quite as well as he did himself. If she liked, therefore, to utter blood-curdling predictions as to what she could, would, or might do in the inconceivable event of his doing anything of the sort, why, he was not the man to grudge her so innocent an amusement.

"Well, I must be goin'," Sal Connor said at last, rising and complacently shaking out her skirts as she spoke. Although she had only come, as had been seen, for a mere morning call, her petticoat was a new purple rep, edged with broad magenta braid, and trimmed with three rows of canary-coloured lace, over which she wore a new green calico bodice.

"'Tis 'feared I am to be going back 'lone," she added, coquettishly. "Maybe that baste is waitin' for me still, an' the drink not out ov him yit! Alley, darlint, you'll cum wid me, won't you? Ach, *doee*, lovey," with a glance at some one who was not by any means Alley.

Poor Alley turned quite pale.

"Usha, don't ask me, Sall, I durstn't," she said, clasping her hands appealingly. "He run out at me once, an' I thought I'd die—I did indade!"

"Gorra, did he want to be a-kissin' ov *you* too?" the other inquired, not without a touch of disdain.

Alley turned a delicate rose-colour.

"I dunno what he wanted, but he frighted me sore. He's a wicked, bad man. He'd dishtroy th' whole ov us out an' out, av he had the chance, just for spite ov Hurrish. 'Tis a fearful thing to have him 'bout the country. I'd leaver meet a mad dog nor a bull any day."

"Trath an' he won't be 'bout it *long*, I tell yis all that!" Bridget said emphatically. "There's buoys that, for the wink ov an eyelid, wud put him out of that,—yis, an' glad, an' proud to do it too; if there is *sum* so mane-spirited they'd take tratement wud insinse a babby—an' unwaned babby—an' only say 'Thank ye!'" with a glance of fiery disdain at her son.

Hurrish laughed.

"'Tis an iligant Christsheen yer makin' me out, mother, anyhow," he said, good-humouredly.

"Christsheen!" Bridget threw all the power of her scorn into the second syllable. "Christ*sheen*, indade! Give me a little spurit! To be growed a man—shtrong, an' tall, an' shtraight—the biggest man out an' out in the counthry—able to dishtroy th' whole ov thim iv he'd a moind, an' niver to lift a hand,—no, nor th' half ov a hand! Shtrike me dead this minite iv I wudn't rayther have a son like Sheeny O'Callaghan, wid niver a leg to put undher him 'tall —so I wud! Shtrike me dead ilse!"

CHAPTER II.

HURRISH SUSPECTS THE UNSEEN POWERS.

In the end old Bridget herself escorted Sal Connor back to her cottage, which was upon the outskirts of Tubbamina, the village just over the ridge of the hill, Hurrish excusing himself on the score of having to see to his boat, which he had left on the sands, and which would certainly be washed away if he delayed much longer. His fishing, as already hinted, was rather an excuse. Now and then, when he got a good haul, he would make a little money by sending a donkey-load to Lisdoonvarna, the water-cure place six or eight miles away, but for the most part it was more pleasure than profit. He had a hankering for the sea, and was not sorry to find an excuse for escaping his mother's tongue and the humdrum monotony of the farm, and for both these purposes the boat was a good excuse.

He did not start, however, for some minutes after his mother and Sal Connor had gone down the slow incline, and were lost to sight over the next grey ridge. Though he had taken the former's threats lightly, they had rather startled him. He had heard them frequently before, it is true, but never expressed quite so definitely. Mat Brady was his enemy, declared and deadly; still, enemy as he was, and brutal, dangerous bully and savage as he was, Hurrish had no particular desire to have him murdered, still less to have his own mother mixed up in that informal transaction.

Murder as a recognised social institution had never somehow quite commended itself either to his intelligence or his humanity! Though he had openly and enthusiastically joined himself to every association which had even nominally the emancipation of Ireland for its aim, he had never allied or desired to ally himself to any of those less avowed societies with which Clare, like every other part of Ireland, is honeycombed, and which subsist upon murder, and upon murder only. He had been elected to one of them, it is true, in his absence, and had weakly refrained from insisting upon his name being struck off again. Through his mother, too, he was better acquainted with the underground doings of the neighbourhood than he by any means ought to have been; but it was reluctantly, and he struggled stoutly to shake himself free from the participation, and to defend, whenever it was possible, the victims of it.

But if he disapproved, why not have given notice to the police, and have had the perpetrators brought to justice? the innocent reader will perhaps inquire. The reader who asks that question must indeed be very innocent, or very slightly acquainted with those unseen springs which make up by far the more important of our inner machinery. The position of the informer in Ireland, to begin with, is the position of an outcast, cursed and abhorred of all men, to be disposed of, so soon as safe opportunity presents itself. It was not fear, however, so much as other hindrances that hampered Hurrish. Claims of all sorts—of honour, of good fellowship, of pity—plucked at him, now on this side and now on that, as the demons in Holbein's print plucked at Sintram as he

rode through the dark valley. Hurrish was no Sintram, yet there was something tragic, as well as decidedly ridiculous, in the acuteness of his dilemma. His very good-nature and sociability were all against him. For what, it may be asked, *is* a good-natured and a naturally gregarious man to do, when all the sociability of his neighbourhood is concentrated around a single focus, and that focus a criminal one?

His own impulses were all of the old-fashioned, easy-going, jovial kind. He hated fighting—except, of course, the open and fisticuff variety; he hated dark deeds and dark secrets, and everything that savoured of unpleasantness and treachery. He would have liked from year's end to year's end to go on in the same genial friendly fashion, the same happy-go-lucky indifference to the future. Pity such natures when their lot has been cast into the bitter yeast of a social revolution! They are the clay pots amongst the iron ones, and the fate of the clay pot is theirs.

He got up after a while, pushed away a chicken which had perched itself meditatively upon his foot, whistled to Lep, and started towards the sea, leaving Alley Sheehan to look after the house and mind the children.

His way led across about half a mile of gradually descending ground, over a succession of slabs of rock, many of them as much as a dozen or more feet in diameter. In all directions these slabs were divided and subdivided by an endless multiplicity of narrow fissures or crevasses, varying from a few inches to a foot across, but reaching down apparently to immeasurable depths. There was something about it that might have reminded a climber of a moder-

ately level glacier—the Mer-de-Glace above Chamounix, for instance,—and like a glacier, the edges or lips of these fissures were worn, channelled, and smoothed away, presenting a curiously molten effect, the result in this case of the action of rain and running water upon the soluble particles of limestone. Instead of naked ice, these crevasses, however, were crammed to the very brim with a green tide of vegetation—ferns and mosses, hairbells, saxifrages, silver silenes, and white mountain dryas, red-petalled daisies, lifting sweet impertinent faces out of their hollow prisons, trailing sprays of honeysuckle flinging their scent-laden treasures broadcast across the scentless rocks—as if earth, defrauded of her natural growths, had crowded all possible accumulations into these receptacles which had been torn so capriciously out of her sides for their reception.

Hurrish strode on, stepping over the narrow fissures, whose edges gave out a responsive click to the contact of his boots—small fragments of stone, detached from the edges, falling with a metallic ring into the nearest cleft. He was in a hurry, for he had really left his boat too close to the edge of the water, having expected to return much sooner. At last he reached the top of the cliff, and could see down into the little horseshoe-shaped bay which served him for a boat-house. All right, the boat was there! and he was able, therefore, to pause for a moment to look around him before beginning the descent.

Picturesqueness *as* picturesqueness counted probably little enough with Hurrish, yet in another

way he was more sensitive to outward impressions than many a cultured gentleman with a brain well stocked with quotations. The roar of the sea, the wet-surfaced rocks, the streaks of sunshine dashed with rain, the wild west wind which had travelled over so many miles of liquid ridge and furrow,—all this was a sort of natural fuel to his imagination, stirring it unconsciously to sudden feats of activity. His was the genuine Celtic temperament — poetic, excitable, emotionable, unreasoning. Of the more brutal and cruel elements, which too often, alas! streak and disfigure that strain, he had hardly a trace. He was kindly to softness, and tender-hearted almost to womanliness. Those schemes of personal vengeance—dark, bloody, tiger-like—which, century after century, have nourished the sense of injury, while they soothed the immediate lot of many a half-starved Celt, were almost as foreign to him as that ox-like indifference which enables men of other races to submit to the dreariest of daily drudgeries, without a thought or a dream of escape. Hurrish had a vein of poetic excitability which craved nourishment. Temperaments which, under happier circumstances, might very well have been the homes of a genuine fount of poetry, will often, for lack of better aliment, feed upon the veriest garbage, and accept the most worthless of sawdust-cakes for bread. The magnificent promises, the fiery denunciations, the windy turbid patriotism of his favourite newspapers — by preference the contraband ones — were such sawdust-cakes to him; he could stand and hear them read aloud by the hour, without even requiring the additional stimulus of whisky. He was not quite

without other imaginative provision, however. Like many a letterless Irish peasant, his mind was stored with an endless stock of old songs and ballads, the sonorous lilt of which has charms even for those least in sympathy with them. To-day, for instance, as he turned from the cliff-edge and hurried down the narrow break-neck path, Lep at his heels, the rapid movement, the wind, the sudden vivifying touch of spring—all excited him without his knowing how or why, and he broke into a strain, half-singing, half-shouting,—

"Think av ould Brian,
War's moighty lion,
'Neath that banner 'twas that he shmote the Dane!
The Northman an' Saxon,
Aft turned their backs on
Those who——"

The strain stopped abruptly! A huge piece of rock came thundering down the side of the cliff, only missing the singer by about half a foot, plunging over the brim of the next ridge, and falling with a tremendous splash, splash, splash into the sea below! A second followed, and then a third. Then a train of smaller ones, each as big as a child's head.

Lep gave a wild bound of dismay, and fled down the path, his tail tucked tight between his legs Hurrish sprang nimbly aside; then, when the falling avalanche had ceased, he turned, and, keeping as close as he could to the edge of the cliff-wall, clambered hastily up the track, his teeth set, and his soul on fire for vengeance. Woe betide the man, whoever he was, who had set those stones rolling! Like many a mild man, Hurrish, with the hero of his song,

could be a lion when he was roused, and his blood was thoroughly up now.

When he got to the top not a soul, however, was to be seen! not a trace or a symptom of any human being. The bare cliff edge stood bathed in light; the little wind-beaten camomile flowers turned up innocent dog-eared faces to him; the wild stony country on the one side, the untravelled wastes of sea on the other, seemed equally void of humanity. He scratched his head, and looked round and round, furious, yet without an object to vent his wrath upon. A trying predicament truly for an infuriated giant!

Where the rocks came from was at any rate easily seen. Along a considerable distance of one part of the top of the cliff ran a sort of natural rampart, known to geologists as a "block beach,"—proof of the stupendous power of the waves which had deposited them there during a long succession of howling winters. Many of these blocks were of enormous size, larger even than those which had so nearly annihilated Hurrish; and beyond this natural barrier, a little way from the edge, stood a small rath or dun, two-thirds of which had been demolished.

Finding no clue to the phenomenon, he at last slowly retraced his steps, looking back from time to time in hopes of espying an antagonist, his soul hot within him and longing for revenge. At the very bottom of his anger there was, however, an underlying touch of mystery,—a suspicion of something not altogether natural. The old demon-worship dies hard in remote regions like this stony-hearted Burren; it forms so large and so strong an element in the traditional inheritance of the Celt, that it seems almost

impossible that it can ever be entirely extirpated. Hurrish was not more superstitious than his neighbours, yet he by no means felt sure that what had just befallen him had not been the work of some malevolent spirit or spirits. What more likely than that an unseen something had toppled those rocks down the cliff for the amusement of seeing a man hop like a hailstone in a shower, or, if he was in a specially malignant mood, to crush him flat under them like a beetle under a warming-pan? It was not such an uncommon occurrence! At Ailleenahaseragh, only a few miles down the coast, there was a hole in a rock that was known to be permanently occupied by an evil spirit. Fishermen had heard him picking loose pieces off the rock at night, and throwing them into the sea. Nay, an old woman, who was passing the place late one evening on her way home from a fair, had actually *seen* something sitting upon the top, with its legs crossed, a pipe in its mouth, and a hump on its back. She would have taken it, she admitted, for a pedlar wearing a pack, but that, fortunately, just as she was getting near she saw that there was a large hole—big enough, she declared, to put a couple of chickens through—in the middle of its back. Now no respectable pedlar, it will be admitted, has ever a hole of that kind through the middle of *his* back! It was one of the disadvantages of that part of Clare, that it was rather a favourite haunt of beings of this kind. There was a lake only three miles away which was haunted by the *Each-Uisge*, or water-horse, a supernatural animal of particularly unpleasant manners. A full account of its appearance and behaviour was written down from the report of an eyewitness, and

is still preserved for reference. It is described as having "a black shining skin," a "switch tail without hair," and "a mule's head, with fins like a haddock." Its habit is to wait till some one passes close to its lair, then to spout out an enormous quantity of water from its mouth, and before he has recovered the shock, it darts upon him, and draws him into the lake, where it rarely happens that even his bones are recovered again. Hurrish's own father had had an adventure with a monster almost more terrible. He was fishing off the island of Ard-oilen, which has always borne a bad reputation ever since it gave the holy Saint Gormgal such an amount of trouble. For during the time that the saint was building his "hermitical retirement" there, he was perpetually tormented by devils in the shape of black choughs, with red legs and bills—two very diabolical traits!—which choughs or devils, so soon as he planted anything, pulled them out again with their bills—a fact to verify which any one who doubts need only visit the island, which will be found to be void of all cultivation unto this day. Hurrish's father, I was about to remark, was pulling up his lines, for it was getting dark, when suddenly they were almost pulled out of his hands by a tremendous weight. He thought that it must be a dozen fish on at least, but when it got near the surface, he saw a blue mist or jelly, with eyes all over it, and in the middle of this jelly a pea-green face, covered with huge warty knobs, and shiny yellow arms and legs, which waved about in all directions, and—what was naturally still more startling—a large whisky-bottle sticking out of a loose flap of skin about the middle of its body. He had given himself up for

lost, but that, happily, he had had an uncle who was learned in such matters, so that he knew at once from his descriptions that this could be no other than Gougalidimus, king of oysters, who was known to frequent these rocks. Accordingly, quick as thought, he dropped a burning spark into the water out of his pipe, which he was fortunately smoking at the time, whereupon the creature melted away immediately and vanished; for fire is the one thing such supernatural beings cannot endure, as all but the most ignorant are, indeed, well aware.

With these occurrences fresh in his mind, it is not to be wondered at that Hurrish felt doubtful as to the real nature of the accident which had befallen him, and that, in any case, he felt that it was just as well to pocket the insult and descend before worse happened. He descended the cliff accordingly, this time without any unpleasant accompaniments, and gained the little strip of land, on the very edge of which, half-surrounded by water, his boat was lying. It was one of the ordinary curaghs or coracles of the country, consisting of a heavy framework of wood, covered with the tarred canvas which has replaced the traditional ox-hide. The canvas was worn in several places—a serious matter in a boat in which the smallest hole is sufficient to send you without warning to the bottom. Hurrish had brought down his pot of tar, also a bundle of fine twigs tied together, which served as a brush, and accordingly he now set to work at once to patch up the places.

His excitement had by this time passed away, and had taken his anger with it. Man or goblin, whatever it was that had thrown those stones, they had

missed him, and therefore, with the help of the saints, might miss him again. By-and-by, as he warmed to his work, he broke out into a new tune—this time a loftier and more heroic strain:—

"'Lord Clare,' he said, 'y' have your wish, there are yer Saxon foes;'
The marshal almost smiled to see how furiously he goes.
How fierce a look thim ixiles wear, were wont to be so gay;
The trisured wrongs of tharty years were in their haa-arts to-day;
Their priesthood hunted down like wolves, their counthry overthrown;
Each felt as if rivinge for all——"

There was another pause. The coracle required turning. It was a job that generally needed two men, for though light, these boats are cumbersome to lift. Hurrish, however, required no aid. Stooping, he embraced the huge black thing—so like some ugly, uncouth animal—in his arms, reared it on end by main force, and propped it against a low rock, in which position he could more readily see what was amiss with the bottom. This done, he finished his strain,—

"was shtaked in him alone.
On Fontenoy! on Fontenoy! H-aaa-rk to the wild hurrah!
Rivinge! Rimimber Limerick! Wh-oooo-p! Down wid the Sasenagh!"

CHAPTER III.

THE UNSEEN POWERS STAND REVEALED.

What Fontenoy was beyond a fight of some sort Hurrish had not a notion. He had not, therefore, the satisfaction of knowing that it really had been a recognised battle—a genuinely respectable European victory,—and a victory, too, due in great part to the prowess of his home-exiled compatriots. It might have been fought in Tierra del Fuego or Nova Scotia, for anything he knew to the contrary. That the Lord Clare who figured in it had fought against England, that much, indeed, was clear to him, and that probably was all he cared to know.

Hurrish possessed an idiosyncrasy which was a very serious scandal to his more thorough-going friends and relatives. This was a sort of sneaking regard, an acknowledged kindliness with which in his heart of hearts he regarded the "ould stock,"—the time-out-of-mind landlords, men as much part of the country they lived in as its rocks, rivers, magpies, or buttercups. For the new-comer, the man of yesterday, of the Encumbered Estates Court—every one who could, rightly or wrongly, be ticketed by the detested word "land-grabber"—his scorn was unmeasured, and his conscience void of reproach. But for the "ould stock,"—the aboriginal landlord, so to speak,—the Fitzgeralds, the O'Kellys, the Macmahons, his own O'Briens of Clare—over these and such as these his heart secretly yearned as a

brother over erring brothers. This general sentiment was strengthened by a personal one, for there was a member of this degenerate race for whom Hurrish cherished a strong feeling of personal regard, nay, affection, and that one—crowning shame and scandal to relate—was no other than his own landlord!

When Hurrish had been a lad of sixteen, but as stout on his legs and as broad-chested nearly in his ragged corduroy jacket as he was to-day, Mr O'Brien —the "Captin" he was then called — used from time to time to be at home on leave from his regiment, and on these occasions used often to send for his namesake—finding him strong and reasonably intelligent—to carry his game or his fishing-basket, as the case might be. The "Captin" and his father were not always upon the best of terms, and the regular gamekeeper, if such a functionary existed, was rarely available. Hurrish was the stanchest of henchmen, and the most admiring. Did a salmon stick—as salmon will stick—amongst the roots and snarls at the bottom of the stream, — Hurrish's clothes were off in a minute, and he would be in the water, no matter how cold the weather or how swift the current. Was a wild duck lost in the bushes,—Hurrish would stay out all night, but he would find it in the end. He possessed a strong native fount of admiration, which craved something to expend itself upon, and in those days the "Captin" supplied that need. He was the idol and ideal of his henchman's youthful admiration, and his feats of fishing and shooting a source of as deep a pride as though achieved by himself — rather considerably

more so. All this, of course, was changed now; nevertheless, an unacknowledged remnant of his former devotion for the "Captin" still lingered in Hurrish's frieze-covered breast. His was a nature that did not readily drop any habit of kindness it had once formed. Perhaps, too, unconsciously to himself, there was some clannish feeling mingling with this regard, though it may be doubted whether he had ever heard the word. Sentiments revert as well as features, and his forebears had followed the "Captin's" forebears quite often enough and long enough to have cut the sentiment deep into their descendant's consciousness. His mother certainly was guiltless of fostering any such slavish or sycophantic notion! In that thorough-going woman's eyes, the best landlord and the worst were exactly equal—as to the inquisitors of old, petty distinctions like virtue or vice counted nothing one way or other in the case of a declared heretic. Contrary to the practice of most Irish landlords, Mr O'Brien had never employed an agent, and his dealings with his tenants were, in consequence, all direct and personal. This in Hurrish's case had kept up the kindly feeling, though where no such kindly feeling existed, the dislike, which otherwise might have been diluted by division, had become concentrated and embittered. A man who could get another to do an unpleasant office, and yet persists in doing it himself, must take the consequences, which are not likely to be agreeable!

Meanwhile the beautiful morning was clouding over, as is apt to be the case where every bit of rising ground acts as a cloud detainer. It had begun to rain, though as yet slightly. The sea was

moaning, and the tide ran farther and farther up into the narrow cove, threatening to leave no standing-room. A sudden scud of wind blowing inshore was cutting off the tops of the waves, and sending the froth flying in ragged clots through the air; a couple of fishing-boats were making all haste to win the little harbour before the gale overtook them; the very puffins and cormorants were coming shorewards with wild discordant cries, winged by the fury of the squall. Suddenly the rain descended in a perfect deluge, washing over the face of the rocks in a white-edged torrent, and rushing down to meet the incoming waves in a hundred mimic rivulets.

Hurrish, however, went doggedly on with his work. He had never had rheumatism, and cared not a jot for the wet. If one left off what one had in hand for rain in Clare, one would rarely do anything there at all.

Lep was less philosophic. With a yelp full of discomfort he ran up to his master, rubbing his white shaggy head against his knee, as if to entreat him to take shelter. Finding that his appeal was disregarded, he, too, submitted to the inevitable, declining to take refuge by himself among the rocks as he might have done, and sitting shivering on the soaking sand, his white coat gradually turning to a collection of ragged wisps of wool, as the drenching water soaked it through and through; his brown eyes, ordinarily hidden under their overhanging thatch, becoming large and glittering, like some sort of gelatinous sea organisms which the retreating sea-weeds have left dry.

At length the tarring of the curagh was finished,

and Hurrish stood back a little way to contemplate it. It looked more like some strange antediluvian animal than ever—a seal or walrus perhaps, of archaic type, left behind in the march of improvement! The shower was beginning to wear away. There were already clear bits in the middle of the clouds, and away towards Ballyvaughan a ray of sunshine broke in a pallid wistful gleam upon the wet rocks.

Hurrish shook himself. Heavy as it had been, the rain had not penetrated his thick frieze clothes, and if the sun came out again he should be dry in a trice. He put the coracle right end up, threw away his twig brush, picked up the pot of tar, and prepared to retrace his steps.

Lep, delighted at the thought of getting home, ran on ahead, his mind already filled with the cabin hearth and its heavenly glow, so much better in his experience than any delusive sunlight. His master delayed a few minutes longer in order to secure the boat with a rope passed round the corner of one of the big rocks, already worn smooth by that service. He was about to mount the path when a sudden howl of anguish, followed by yelp upon yelp of pain and terror, reached him from above. With a bound he was at the cliff and beginning to mount. He had not gone many yards before he paused, riveted to the spot by what he saw. On a sort of outlier of rock, a little to the left of where he was standing, stood his enemy, Mat Brady, with an evil grin on his hideous brutalised face, and alas! alas! in his throttling grasp poor faithful white-coated Lep, his master's inseparable companion ever since five years ago he had saved him from drowning as a pup.

The dog's fate was evident. The other brute was going to throw him over the cliff, only delaying, in fact, in order to enhance the agony, and his own consequent enjoyment of it. Hurrish started forward. Lep caught sight of his master, and again and again howled for help. Hurrish redoubled his efforts, but the distance was still considerable. Before he could reach the spot the deed would have been done, and the doer of it safe from pursuit.

Once, twice, Mat Brady had swung the dog over the yawning height. The third time he was about to launch him upon his fatal journey, when—not his arms, but his legs—were suddenly pinioned fast from behind.

A wild tatterdemalion figure, with white vacant face, starting eyes, and long lank hair streaming in the wind, had sprung, it was not easy to say from where, and had delayed the execution.

"Hould him thin Thady, more power to ye! Thunder and turf, hould him till I git t' him!" Hurrish shouted from below.

His astonishment over Mat Brady's native brutality returned in all its force. With a howl of fury he turned and clutched the new-comer by the throat, necessarily dropping Lep, who thereupon took to his heels, never resting until he was once more safe under his master's shield. It seemed at first as if one victim was simply going to be substituted for another. Mat Brady's clutch was upon the new-comer's throat, and he was dragging him nearer and nearer to the brink. Now one foot was over it; now the other; now he was all but gone. Happily Hurrish was by this time close at hand, and with a hideous execration.

and a kick which stretched his victim full length upon the very verge, Mat Brady broke away, betaking himself once more to the rocks, and scrambling over the rifts with that odd shambling gait of his, more like the ungainly movement of a sloth or some such plantigrade animal than anything more distinctively human.

Hurrish did not attempt to follow. He stood still and watched him, an expression of dark animosity settling down upon his good-looking placable face.

"Rin! trath ye'd bether rin!" he muttered. "Maybe y' havn't forgot th' batin I giv ye last Michelmas was a twilvemonth! But what's the good of a batin to the loikes of you? All the batin in life wudn't bate dacency into ye, so't wudn't. 'Tis *shootin'* ye want, ye baste of the world, an' I'd shoot ye as riddy as an ould scauld-crow any day in the week if it wasn't for Morry. Poor Morry! God help ye for a misfortunate gossoon! 'Tis an iligant brother ye have, achorra, sure an' sartin; an' 'tisn't the ind of him we've seen neither, more's the pity!"

CHAPTER IV.

INTRODUCES THE READER TO A FOOL AND A PHILOSOPHER.

Thady Connor, or Thady-na-Taggart, was the idiot or "natural" of Tubbamina. Village idiots, once common institutions in England, are now scarce—

increasing civilisation, or possibly increasing dislike to people who give trouble, having tended to cause their disappearance, or their concentration in the parish workhouse. In Ireland, civilisation has not yet reached this point, and the village idiot is still a recognised member of the community—nay, an appreciated one. The "natural" only does rather better what every one else does more or less—namely, as little as possible. As a mere standard of comparison, too, and as a pleasant stimulus to complacency, he can never be other than a somewhat popular institution.

Out of all the neighbourhood of Tubbamina there was no fire to which Thady-na-Taggart gravitated with so unhesitating a readiness as to Hurrish O'Brien's, or so profound a certainty of a hearty welcome. Poor Thady had a dumb passionate affectionateness that is to be found in hardly any perfectly sane citizens, and only in a few exceptionally natured dogs. For those he loved he would cheerfully have walked into the fire or into the sea had they requested him to do so. When Hurrish went for a day's fishing, Thady would wade out waist-deep to meet him upon his return, to help to pull in the boat, and to caper round him with fond gesture of affection and exuberance, like some uncouth but tender-hearted cow or colt.

Thady was no respecter of persons. Even before the recent socialistic illumination, the difference between frieze-coat and broadcloth was practically non-existent for him. He would sit on his heels, with a laugh of derision on his face, when Sir Thomas MacDoual, who owned half Tubbamina, rode by.

Even when his lordship, the lord Bishop of Killagobbet, came to open the new parish church, Thady, to the scandal of all his relatives—the female ones especially—declined to get up or pay any respect to that august prelate, so that they were obliged to stand in a cluster before him, with petticoats extended, curtseying down to the ground in order to avert the curse of heaven from his contumacious head.

The thoughts of an idiot are mysteries! Like dreams, or the visions of a man under chloroform, they need an exponent. That Thady did think was evident, for his lips would work rapidly, and his forehead knit, and he would mutter half-expressed words, which sounded like arguments or expostulations addressed to some unseen auditor. There was no one, however, to interpret these arguments, — certainly no one at Tubbamina; so that, like other veiled sayings of greater celebrity, their secret remained for ever locked up in their utterer's own breast.

When Hurrish O'Brien reached the scene of the late conflict, he found poor Thady sitting up and rubbing his head, the back of which had sustained several severe contusions against the pointed stones at the top of the cliff. Even although your head may not be worth very much when it is whole, a hurt to the back of it is probably quite as uncomfortable as though it were the honoured brain-box of a Solon or a Solomon. Poor Thady's innocent face was puckered up like a baby's, preparatory to a cry. It was evident that he was in considerable pain.

Hurrish supplied probably the best immediately available remedy by rushing up, grasping him warmly by the hand, and thanking him again and again for

his timely support, Lep playing a good second by wagging his tail and licking his defender's hand—an act of politeness which he had never before condescended to perform to this poor shred and outcast of humanity.

If he did not understand all that they intended to convey, Thady at least took in the general meaning, his poor vacant white face growing suddenly rosy with delight. He did not say anything, but he opened and shut his mouth a great many times in succession, each time emitting an odd jerking noise, something like the click of a lock, or the startled note of the bald-coot. It was poor Thady-na-Taggart's way of laughing.

When he had a little recovered, Hurrish helped him to his feet, and took him back with him, supporting his steps carefully over the rocks. Lep, much subdued by his late experience, followed close "at heel," glancing nervously to right and left for fear of a fresh surprise. Once, when they were passing a suspicious-looking shieling, whose roofless walls rose grey and forlorn over the stony platform, he might have been observed to wriggle round to the far-side of his master, so as to interpose that substantial barrier between himself and it. Another time when a thrush rose suddenly out of a ferny fissure where, for lack of better retreat, it had built its nest, Lep trembled violently from head to foot, and was some minutes before he recovered his equanimity. His nerves, it was evident, were seriously upset!

Some time before they reached the cabin, its blunt gable-ends could be seen rising over the grey encompassing brows of rock. It stood so completely

detached from everything else, that it seemed to be considerably larger than it actually was. The solid stone walls had happily never been whitewashed, so that years, instead of degrading them to a ducketty grey with inky streaks, had endowed them with a delightfully diffusive crop of yellow lichens, which produced in sunlight a golden and gleaming effect. Another advantage was, that the enormous size of the material and stoniness of the surroundings lent a certain air of stern and arid purity to the immediate neighbourhood of the house. There was no repulsive muck-heap before the door, and no puddled mud. Instead, there were enormous paving-flags—natural, not artificial—which it took four of Hurrish's longest strides to traverse, and upon which the house seemed to stand as if just set down upon them out of a box. Everything, save the actual building itself, was upon the same Brobdingnagian scale. A low wall, that encircled three sides of the cabin, was built of gigantic oblong pieces of stone, amongst which might be seen the dismembered trunk of a cross,—not in its present condition recognised as such. There was no porch, but on one side of the door had been erected a side-screen, of the kind known as a *lascaur*—an obvious necessity, where the wind often drives with a force that would blow a stray child or loose piece of furniture straight up the chimney. And this *lascaur* consisted mainly of a single block of stone, which might have come in usefully in building the great Pyramid, and which looked like a legacy left from the days of King Goll MacMorna and his eight hundred giants.

Old Bridget was sitting as usual over the fire, stir-

ring the pot for the mid-day meal. At sight of her son, however, she at once sprang up, and came forward with gleaming eyes to meet him.

"Hurrish, avick, whar have ye been? Have ye heard what happened this day? glory be to God and the saints for the same! Buggle—the little black villin that was servin' writs, ye know—he's *dead.* The boys dun for him on yesternight at the Killimaney cross-roads! An' my blessin' an' the blessin' of heaven be upon thim for the same, Amen! Arrah, where were ye, not to be lendin' a hand? That I should have a son—a growd man—the strongest and biggest man in the counthry,—and him never strikin' a blow wid the rist!"

Hurrish made no immediate reply. Somehow this excellent piece of news did not seem particularly to raise his spirits. This was not the sort of warfare that had warmed his heart, and filled his head, as he painted his boat in the Tullymaney saleen.

"Sure I hard the crature was lame, mither," he said, in a tone of expostulation. "'Tisn't much killin' he'd take, God help him!"

"Lame!" Bridget's eyes blazed, and she set her teeth like a tigress. "An' is't *his* part ye're takin', now? Faith it wanted but that! *His* part!—the dirty spalpeen,—the black Pratestant whilp! Lame?" she went on, raising her voice louder and louder,—"I warrant ye, he's lame enough now, anyhow! Limpin' down the road to hell, that's what he is doin' this minute, the little thievin' Shingann! Och, an' I'd give me two eyes to see it, so I would! I'd laugh,—I'd laugh till the tears rin down me cheeks, only to see him goin'!"

"Whist, mither, whist! My God! is it a woman ye are, at all, at all? Ye make me 'shamed, ye do. D'ye think the crature hadn't a mither, too—one that's cryin' her heart out for him most like this minute, God hilp her! I'm not sayin' that he oughtn't to hav been shtopt," Hurrish continued, rather shocked apparently at his own heretical humanity. "But to be baten to death!—an' him all by hisself—by a hape of big men! Och, mither 'cushla, 'taint that way ould Oireland's to be freed anyhow. 'Tis thim sort o' doin's that makes the Cause be 'bused, so it do! A dozen big men settin' on one poor trimblin' little bodagh, and batin' the life out on him wid shticks at night! 'Tis cold my blood is this very minute, to think ov it."

"'Twasn't sticks at all, so that shows how much ye know. 'Twas *shtones* they dun it with," Bridget said sullenly.

"Well, an 'sn't that wurst, if anythink? If he was to be kilt, sure shootin' ud be the marcifulest."

"Och, wud ye be takin' powder and shot to the loikes of that?" she retorted with fine scorn. "'Twould be like takin' the fire-shovel to kill a flea, so 'twud—no better."

Hurrish said no more. The relative advisability of shooting a process-server or stoning him to death did not, perhaps, seem to him to be worth a domestic argument. Still he felt disturbed. It was not the mode of warfare which he would have preferred.

Thady-na-Taggart was meanwhile sitting huddled up on the stool which had been set for him,—the two boys, who had just come in from school, making furtive faces at him whenever their father's back was

turned. He was dimly aware when people were talking around him, but what they were talking about he had not a notion. As for taking part in any conversation himself, he had never done such a thing in his life! He was as nearly dumb, in fact, as any creature born with the complete use of his tongue and his palate could be. What conversation he had was either with himself, or with the magpies and saddle-crows, whom he was sometimes set to scare. At present he was employed in counting his fingers, and seemed to find the calculation inconveniently abstruse.

Old Bridget—of whom he was desperately afraid, and was secretly watching under his eyelashes—stalked about the cabin, swinging her skinny arms, and making a clean sweep of any one who ventured to approach her. Lep, who was peeping innocently into a pot, on the chance of finding something edible in it, received a kick which sent him yelping back to his master. She was certainly not an agreeable old woman this! Looking at her at such moments, you would have been irresistibly reminded of those historic beldames who, from time to time, have revelled in perfect carnivals of horrors. In times of revolution she would have been certain to have come conspicuously to the front. Her wrinkled face would have been a sort of inevitable accompaniment to the gibbet or the guillotine, and in more irregular executions she would probably have developed into a perfect demon of ingenuity,—one of those horrible, but unfortunately not impossible, incarnations of cruelty that make hideous the last moments of murdered men.

There was not a redeeming point, not a touch of softness or tenderness, anywhere in her whole composition, with the exception, perhaps, of the inevitable she-wolf's love for the offspring she herself has borne. No tenderness, no weakness, no submission disarmed her. Alley Sheehan's fragile girlish beauty, for instance, had never moved her to anything but hatred. She could have turned her out a dozen times to starve, if Hurrish would only have let her. In vain the poor child tried to conciliate her with untiring submissiveness; her very sweetness and gentleness seemed only an additional incentive to the other's rage, as is by no means unfrequently the case. The poor girl used to wake at night in an agony of terror, thinking that Bridget was standing over her, or that she was shouting some order which she had failed to obey. The very sound of her voice made her tremble painfully; indeed it was not unfrequently followed by the discharge of some handy missile, such as a bottle or a broken seat of a chair, sometimes—more terribly still—by personal chastisement, administered by her own hard and merciless hands. Alley never complained to Hurrish of these persecutions. She used to run away whenever she could, and hide herself amongst the rocks; and when evening came she would cry herself to sleep, night after night, in the little black corner of the inner room which she shared with Katty, the baby of the O'Brien brood. She had a longing, amounting often to absolute agony, for a mother's care, or for some womanly tenderness;—it was the strongest yearning by far of her nature. She was too much still of a child herself to take the children to her heart, other-

wise than as playfellows, often as fellow-victims, and to have revealed her own innermost feelings to any man, even Hurrish, would have been utterly wounding to her feelings of delicacy.

Poor little Alley Sheehan! Hers was certainly the tiniest atom of a mind that could readily be conceived, comparing unfavourably probably in several important particulars with that of many a well-instructed cat or dog. What there was of it, however, was pure as crystal—pure as one of those rock-girt pools amongst the crests of the mountains she could see across the bay,—pools into which nothing looked but the floating clouds, the cold white moon, the great encompassing galaxies of stars. There was a sort of petal-like delicacy of texture about her moral and spiritual nature, an alpine-flower bloom and fragrance, which is rare, as all fine things are rare, but not rarer, I conceive, in her class than in any other; a sensitiveness, too, which made all unkindness cut like a lash, and which lent a terrible strength to her gaunt old tyrant's ferocity. Hurrish was well aware of all this, and though, with a mixture of indolence and traditional reverence, he never directly reproved his mother, he was often on the watch to intervene, generally jocosely and as if accidentally, between her and her victim. Alley, in her turn, knew this, and her gratitude flew out to him for it in a perpetual benediction. She loved Hurrish as she loved God! There was no idea of irreverence in the juxtaposition of the two ideas. Her mind, in fact, was too simple, too inherently limited, to admit of any large or complicated variety of emotions. It was an instrument of but few strings, but those few were exquisitely strung.

A shadow came to the cabin-door. Hurrish turned, and his face lit up with pleasure, while Bridget's grew if anything rather darker. An old man stood there, a very small and wrinkled old man, neatly dressed in an old tail-coat with brass buttons, corduroy knee-breeches, blue stockings, and a high black beaver hat, considerably bent but well brushed, who came forward with a polite salutation and the old-fashioned greeting, "God save all here!"

Hurrish went to meet him with hands outstretched.

"Phil Rooney, is that yerself! Come in, man; yer welcome kindly. Clancy, go git a chair out of the bedroom for Mr Rooney—d'ye hear me, ye clip, be shmart! Maybe ye'll stip down to the little bit of pasture, though," he added, rather hastily. "There's a baste I bought last Tuam was a twelvemonth, I'd take it kindly if y'd throw yer oye over him. 'Tis wakely the creature seems, whatever ails it."

Phil Rooney was a man of a type and generation fast passing away. He and an old maiden sister lived quite alone in a small cabin upon the main road to Ennis, and save when appealed to on some farriery question, upon which he was an acknowledged expert, he rarely stirred off his own little bit of land. After his rent was paid he was worth perhaps at most ten pounds a-year, and without the smallest accusation of exaggeration he might be called a finished gentleman, if self-respect and the most perfect breeding in the world are the essentials of that disputed term. Whatever admirable qualities the new proletariat may attain to, when the present frothy effervescence subsides, that particular type, it is to be feared, it never can resuscitate. It

is doomed, like the elk or the old Irish wolf-hound, —productions which, once extinct in a country, are extinct in it for ever and ever.

The young fellows of Tubbamina thought very little of old Phil Rooney. He was but a poor patriot to begin with. The great lights of America had been flashed in his eyes, but they had been flashed in vain. He was too old-fashioned properly to appreciate the merits of the great dynamite propaganda, and even the simpler home-grown methods of carrying on the warfare were often quite beyond him. When that fine young fellow, Hyacinth Rutty, for instance, was retailing before a sympathetic audience the part he had himself taken in the execution of Mr Dempster of Rath's bailiff, who had been set upon one night by twenty armed men, killed, and hastily buried in a bog, old Rooney got up, before that exciting tale was even completed, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, pocketed it, and walked slowly out of the cabin, though it was raining a perfect deluge as it happened at the moment.

The only one of the younger generation who really appreciated him and enjoyed his conversation was Hurrish O'Brien; but then Hurrish himself, as we have seen, was considered a very second-rate sort of patriot by the more out-and-out spirits of the neighbourhood.

The two men went down the little hill together; —an odd contrast, one so big, broad, and stalwart, in his loose ill-fitting clothes; the other so small, neat, precise, like a model of an Irishman upon a bog-oak inkstand. In his anxiety about the cow, and still more perhaps to avoid a quarrel, Hurrish had forgot-

ten all about poor Thady. No sooner, however, had the idiot perceived that his protector had departed, than he too sprang from his stool, and fled out of the cabin and after them in full pursuit down the hill. He would just as soon have remained shut up with an unchained lioness—if he had ever heard of so dangerous an animal—as with old Bridget in her present humour! When he reached the little field, Hurrish and Phil Rooney were already standing beside the cow, the former explaining the symptoms, the latter—a pair of big horn spectacles perched upon his nose—feeling the patient's pulse, and forming a diagnosis with all the dignity and importance of a Court physician. Poor Thady—idiot though he was—was as sensitive as any high-flown lover as to the sentiments of those he cared for. Seeing, therefore, after a few minutes' patient waiting, that he was not wanted, and that his presence had not even been perceived, he stole silently away, getting slowly and laboriously over the rough ground, his white lack-lustre face and queer bleached tatterdemalion garments constituting as perfect a resemblance to his stony surroundings as ever the coat or feathers of arctic bird or beast to its eternal snow-fields.

The absorbing interest of the cow's illness over, and its future treatment decided upon, the conversation of the other two lapsed, as a matter of course, to the day's tragedy, which both agreed in regretting, though both held the unfortunate Buggle to be primarily responsible for his own fate,—a process-server, as every reasonable person knows, having no more human rights than a stoat, and being liable, like that vermin, to be killed whenever met with.

"I wud wunder a dacent man wud do it, yis indeed," Old Rooney said in his cracked treble. (English was a foreign language to him, and at home he never spoke anything but his native tongue, whereas Hurrish, like most of the younger generation, preferred the former,—despite its name, by the way, which will doubtless be changed for the better when the new Irish Republic finds time to look about it.)

"I'm not sayin' he oughtn't to ha' been shtopped," he observed, in response to his friend's remark. "Don't mistake me, Phil. But shtones!—they're nasty cruel things shtones is! The blood rins cowld through my body when I think of that cratur all by hisself—rinnin' for the bare life, an' beggin' an' prayin' ov thim to let him off, and they throwin' the stones at him an' laughin'! Lard I can see it 's if I'd been there! an' the moon gallivantin' along the sky the way it does, an' not carin' th' half of a ratten pittatee what goes on underneath! An' niver a one nigh him—'less God, maybe," Hurrish added, with a considerable doubt in his mind as to whether God would have anything to say to a process-server. "'Twas only yesterday one of the bhoys telled me some wan ax'd him if he wasn't 'feared to be goin' about the counthry servin' writs an' suchlike, an' that he ups an' says no, for he knew they'd niver touch a hair ov his head, 'case of his bein' a cripple an' not able for to defind hisself! Och, Phil! man alive, 'taint that way the counthry's to be righted, howsomedever! What, killin' a man here and killin' a man there, and frightenin' a lot of poor foolish colleens, wid rushin' in to the houses in the dead of the night, cuttin' off their hair, an' makin' them sware—the divil a bit they

know what! Dishtroying dumb bastes, too, that never did no one any harm. Sure, that's not *fightin'!* D'ye think the *Inglish*—me curses on thim—care how many of wan anither we dishtroy? Isn't that what they're *wantin'*, the bliggards? I'm not spakin', mind ye, agin the Laigue—God defind it—only I wish they'd make thim shtop this potterin' sort of work intoirely, an' pass the word for the risin'. 'Tis fightin' we want, and fightin' *men*, not cows and colleens!"

Phil Rooney took out his snuff-box—a brass one with a medallion of the Liberator on the top. He was a philosopher, and opined that a great deal of fuss was made by young men who had not had *his* experience. *He* could remember the pre-famine days and the rising of '48, and Macmanus, and O'Doherty, and Meagher of the Sword, and most of the heroes of a generation ago, and it was his opinion that the time had now come when what the country wanted was peace and quietness. Of the modern race of agitators he did not hesitate to profess the profoundest contempt.

"There's bad times and there's good times," he said sententiously in Irish, "and I don't see that there's so very much amiss with these. If you young fellows had seen the times *I* have, you might talk! Why, I remember in Ballysadare, when there were forty-three corpses lying dead at one time! Forty-three! yes, indeed, and they didn't need to be buried either to be skeletons most of them! The changes too! Why, I can remember when it was all the *masters* the bailiffs was after! Did I ever tell you of the time a bailiff came down to Lugnaskeagh, all the way from London it was, with a writ for the

master? A terrible wild man he was, Sir Malachy O'Donel, God rest his soul! but there wasn't a boy on the place wouldn't have died and gone to jail for him, so there wasn't. Well, the bailiff man brought the writ all the way over the sea—a fine upstanding young fellow, with a blue waistcoat, and a gold watch, and a necktie right up to his chin. And he wanted, right or wrong, to get up to the house to serve it on the master. But if he did, the boys caught him just as he was reaching the great door, and nothing would do them but he must eat it; and eat it he did, sure enough,—paper, and ink, and seals, and all, and the sputtering and the fighting!—oh, wirrastrue, wirrastrue! that *was* a sight. And his honour, Sir Malachy, peeping out behind the window-curtains all the while, and laughing fit to split. And when the last bit of paper was eaten, and the young man had gone away, spitting, and swearing to have the law on them, he came out and gave them a glass of whisky all round, and they hurrahed—I was only a slip of a gossoon myself at the time—they hurrahed, so you'd have heard them at Gort! Seems odd to remember now, when it's nothing but killing the landlords will do them," Phil added, with another philosophic sniff out of the brass snuff-box.

Hurrish laughed loud and long at this story, though, as will easily be imagined, he had heard it a few times before. He loved old Phil Rooney's yarns, and often felt a secret regret that he had not himself belonged to an earlier generation. The faction-fights, scrimmages, and "divarsions" generally of a generation or two ago, seemed to him to be of a much more delectable type than anything which came in

a man's way nowadays. Not that there was any lack of fighting or head-breaking either, thank God, but it all seemed to have grown duller somehow. There was too much earnest about it all. Men killed one another for *reasons*, not from pure love and friendliness. You took measures to rid yourself of any one, as you might take measures to rid your house of rats; there was no risk or "intertainmint" about it at all. Now Hurrish was sportsman enough to think a game decidedly the better for a spice of danger!

CHAPTER V.

AN ENLIGHTENED VARIETY OF PATRIOTISM.

While this conversation was going on, the two men had left the small green oases, and were making their way up the stony sides of Gortnacoppin, above the rapid stream which ran white as milk over its boulder-strewn bed. Hurrish rented one-half of this valley from Mr O'Brien of Donore, and kept sheep upon it—goat-like creatures, which appeared to feed upon the stones, there was so little else to be seen. What grass there was, however, was sweet and good, like all the Burren pasture; nor was their hunger to be balked even by the deep stony rifts which seemed set there for the express purpose of breaking their legs, but into which they complacently poked their noses as into so many recognised food-troughs.

A little higher up, the stream they had been following suddenly disappeared, as the way of streams is in these thirsty limestone regions. The valley thereupon changed its character. From a roughly sawn trench, broken in every direction with loose boulders, and presenting all the appearance of a half-emptied stone quarry, it suddenly became a symmetrical bowl, rising in an architectural-looking crescent, the lines of stratification following directly one above the other, like the seats of an amphitheatre. All over the Burren this oddly architectural effect presents itself. You are brought face to face with a frowning fortress, outworks, glacis, ramparts, all complete; or you drop suddenly into a stony amphitheatre, with orderly ranges of seats one above the other, which appear to be only waiting for some dilatory audience. In this instance the human part of the scene was represented by two sets of habitations, ruins both of them, but ruins of widely different dates. One a group of cabins — deserted perhaps twenty years back — roofless, blear-eyed, smoke-blackened,—repellent even in their very piteousness; the other a group of those far-famed "clochauns" or beehive oratories, which rejoice the soul of the antiquary in these Celtic solitudes. Mysterious-looking, wigwam-like abodes, built of undressed stones, put together without the aid of mortar, larger stones projecting here and there, like sticks out of a bird's nest. A doorway at one side—the doorway of a dog-kennel—averaging perhaps three feet and a half in height, and over this doorway a window, five, or in unusually boldly proportioned specimens six inches across, while over this window again five white

quartz pebbles set perpendicularly and three horizontally combine to make a little cross, looking at a distance as if splashed in in whitewash. Three of these Liliputian cells—all that remained of a once populous monastery—dotted the grey floor of the amphitheatre. Fancy pictured the wild head of an Irish monk—say about the year 650—protruded through his doorway of a morning, like his cousin the hermit-crab's through the mouth of its shell, while its owner—crouched necessarily upon all-fours—looked round the valley and considered the prospects of breakfast!

Our two friends paused a moment and looked up this stony valley, which was threaded by a tiny path trodden by the feet of passers-by, and leading to the high-road which lay upon the other side of the next ridge. Some one was descending this path—a tall young man, dressed, not like Hurrish and his old companion in rough home-spun frieze, but in one of those suits of ready-made tweed which are rapidly taking the place of the older costume all over the country. A well-built, well-looking young fellow, showing a pale, rather sun-deepened complexion, close-cropped hair, large reddish moustache, and a chin betokening firmness, not to say obstinacy. A pleasant face and an intelligent one, yet a face, none the less, which seemed meant to warn you not to quarrel, if you could conveniently avoid it, with its owner.

Hurrish's own genial face lit up with pleasure at sight of the new-comer.

"Maurice Brady himself!" he shouted, long before they were within speaking distance. "The top of the mornin' and the best of good luck to you, Morry,

me boy, an' where have ye hid yerself this month ov Sundays? 'Tis sick for the sight of you I've been, an' some wan else too, that ye'd maybe think more ov,' he added meaningly, as the young man drew nearer.

Maurice Brady's mother and Hurrish had been first-cousins, had spent their childhood next door to one another, and had made mud-pies beside the same puddles. It had been a bad day for the poor woman when she was tormented by her relations into marrying old Michael Brady, the widower, and going to live in his dirty cabin on the top of the ridge which divided Gortnacoppin from Ballynadugal. The father was no sooner dead than the brutal son had turned upon the unfortunate woman, and had literally harried her out of existence,—the first quarrel between him and Hurrish arising out of the latter's interference on her behalf. After his stepmother's death, some compunction seemed to have come over the savage, or natural feelings may have asserted themselves, for his treatment of his brother, though bad enough, was, comparatively speaking, humane. The boy had been considered to show a turn for learning, and it had even been at one time proposed that he should be sent to Maynooth. This, however, as the time drew nearer, he had himself strongly resisted—the limitations of a priest's life, however balanced by other advantages, having absolutely no charms for him.

Like every Irishman of the reigning generation, Maurice Brady cherished dreams of ambition,—dreams, too, by no means destitute, as it seemed to him, of solid foundations. If every recruit of the Grand Army carried a marshal's baton in his knap-

sack, surely every Nationalist recruit, that can read, write, and spell, carries an appointment in the coming Irish Republic somewhere or other about his personal possessions. Why not? Was there not young Egan Shaughnessy, who had been foreman only the other day in the same little haberdashery shop at Miltown-Malbay in which Maurice Brady himself served, and what was he now? Member for Polladoo, and likely to rise to any dizzy height so soon as the Nationalists began really to warm to their work! Maurice had taught himself shorthand in his leisure moments, and had already done a certain amount of newspaper work. It was only for the 'Killogenesawee Shillelagh and Flag of Ballyduff,' it is true, at present, but then everything in life, we know, depends upon a beginning.

He had other tastes, however, besides his ambition —besides, that is to say, what he called his patriotism. He was a young man of remarkably good taste, in fact, considering his opportunities, and Alley Sheehan's great grey eyes—wasted as they were upon most of her contemporaries—had had their full effect upon him. From his boyhood Hurrish's cabin had been far more of a home to him than the one he had lived in. Small, dark, and uninviting as it would have seemed to most people, with its hermetically sealed windows and immovable atmosphere of peat-smoke, it was a palace in comparison with the foul hovel in which he and his brother had herded together;—a palace, too, lit by kind voices and friendly looks—for even the termagant Bridget had in those days had a good word for the handsome, quick-witted lad, who seemed born to reflect credit upon his

belongings. As for Hurrish, his pride and delight in young Brady were simply limitless. His own literary attainments were strictly confined to being able to spell out the contents of the dirty little newspaper which went the rounds of the hamlet, and was often a week old, and nearly in pieces, before it reached his hands. Like every member of his class, he had a profound reverence, however, for education in the abstract,—"Larnin's a load aisy carried," being one of the commonest sayings to be heard upon an Irish peasant's lips. Maurice Brady's learning was not, perhaps, a very formidable burden at present, still he was a promising youngster unquestionably, and so regarded by most people, Hurrish foremost. "Bedad an' 'tis a gran' man he'll be yit, niver *you* fear!" was his invariable reply to those cavilling remarks which even the most conspicuous merit in so invidious a world is unfortunately liable to.

When Maurice first announced his wish to marry Alley, Hurrish had given a ready consent, and it was settled that the marriage was to take place as soon as Maurice could venture to support a wife. Since then, matters however had changed. Fresh feuds had broken out between the two houses, and it seemed but too likely that in Tubbamina to-day, as in Verona of old, the hopes of the lovers were to be the sacrifice.

After a while, old Phil Rooney, between whom and the new-comer there seemed to be no very warm sympathy, took his departure, betaking himself to the narrow thread-like path leading to the top of the ridge, his small bent figure in its grey antique dress seeming to merge into the rocks as it vanished slowly

in the distance. As soon as he was safely out of hearing, Maurice Brady stopped short, and pointed towards the opposite side of the valley,—

"Hurrish, I'm afeared Mat means to have Maloney's farm," he said abruptly.

"Ye don't mane it, Morry! Sure 'tis more nor his life's worth. The boys'll kill him sure as they would a jack-snipe!"

"He won't stop for that!" the other answered, not without a touch of pride. "If Mat's mind is made up to have it, have it he will, if every soldier out of Dublin is brought to guard it." He looked across the valley at this so-called farm—a wild miz-maze of rocks with small "fat" hollows at intervals,—the sort of "farm" to make a Norfolk or Leicestershire farmer's eyes start out of his head. Yet it was one which in ordinary times commanded a good rent, and —stranger still—was worth it too.

"What I'm most afraid of," he went on, after a minute, "is about him and you. I don't know what's come to him lately, but he's like a man distraught. I was up at Slievefoore on my way here, and had to wait, as he was out; and when he came in he was cursing—I never heard him so bad—raving and swearing he'd have yer blood, — and not drunk either," the brother added meditatively.

Hurrish's good-humoured brow grew dark.

"He was nigh killing poor Lep this mornin'," he said, frowning at the recollection. "Begorra, if 't hadn't been for thinkin' of you, Morry, I'd ha' throttled the life out of him thin and there. Be my sowl, yis!"

Young Brady made no answer, but he, too, frowned.

Mat's doings had long been beyond defence; still he was his brother, and he had too deep-rooted a self-respect not to consider that this fact imparted to him an importance not his own. It offended him that Hurrish should make such a speech in *his* hearing.

"Is Alley 't home?" he inquired rather haughtily, after they had walked on some way in silence. It was not often he allowed himself to slip into such colloquialisms, for, like most aspirants to distinction, he kept an anxious guard over his tongue. With old acquaintances, however, old habits are apt to break out.

"She is, Morry avick — but sure, I'm fear'd ye'd betther not come in," Hurrish said apologetically. "What wid these goin's on of Mat's, an' wan thing an' another, *herself's* jist fit to be tied. Sure ye know yerself how 'twas last toime?"

Maurice did know unpleasantly well. Old Bridget had set upon him with broom and mop, and had fairly driven him away, threatening to upset the boiling potato-pot over him if he came again.

"I never see Alley now at all," he answered irritably. "It's an uncommonly queer way of being engaged to a girl, never setting eyes upon her from month's end to month's end, and I'm not going to stand it much longer either, what's more," he added, fiercely.

"'Tis indade, Morry. Thrue for ye, me poor bhoy," Hurrish said, deprecatingly. "'Taint no doin' of mine, anyhow. I'll tell ye what, now," he added, brightening up under a sudden inspiration; "come ov Wi'nsday. *Herself* ull be at Tullalogue wid the spring

chickens, an' you'll find the coast clane an' clear, an' n'er a one in it 't all, only just little Alley herself and the childer."

Maurice Brady made no answer. The picture was inspiriting certainly, still he did not choose to relax too soon in his offended deportment. He knew very well that, in point of fact, it was not Hurrish's fault, —beyond the weakness, that is, of yielding for peace' sake to old Bridget's furious animosities. He was out of humour, however, and not inclined, therefore, to make the admission. Besides, it was never necessary to stand upon ceremony with Hurrish.

"All right—I'll come on Wednesday," he said, at last. "Mind you tell Alley so. I'll not go on now, as it seems there's no use," he added, stopping short. "I promised Phil Donellan to look him up some time before he sailed, and I mightn't get another chance."

He nodded to Hurrish, and turned abruptly away and along a narrow "bohereen," between two loose lacework walls leading in the direction of Tubbamina. The other man stood still for several minutes, wistfully watching the tall active figure striding rapidly along, until it had turned the next corner and was lost to sight. Maurice, however, never looked back. He knew that Hurrish was fonder of him than of any other creature in the world—his own children and Alley barely excepted,—and perhaps this knowledge gave him a sense of power over the older, stronger, more tender-natured man. It is not, we all know, an unfrequent source of superiority.

It would be difficult to imagine two men, born under almost identical circumstances, more unlike

than those two who had just parted upon the ridge of Gortnacoppin. To Hurrish, life in general—past, present, and future—was all part of an abounding mystery, which might be understood perhaps by Father Denahy, or other competent authorities, but into which he himself never dreamt of probing. He was a devout Catholic, and had a tolerably clear conception of a penal region in which unconverted Protestants and other enemies of Ireland would form the principal portion of the population. As for those more cheerful realms to which he would wish to be himself translated, they were to a great extent confused and mixed up with traditions of the O'Brasil, Tir-nan-oge, and other paradises of departed Celtic heroes, which he constantly scanned the Atlantic in hopes of catching a glimpse of, and in whose reality he believed very nearly as emphatically.

Maurice Brady professed Catholicism, of course, and duly attended mass, but he certainly never troubled his head about any future, orthodox or unorthodox. Life was far too clear and sharply defined for him to need to expand his horizon in such unprofitable directions. His intellectual fabric, if not very wide-reaching, was, at least, remarkably compact and coherent. He had not to lay it to his conscience that he had ever wasted his opportunities, or allowed foolishly sentimental considerations to stand in his way. Clever young men, born under peasants' roofs, often waste half their time in escaping from their early ties. The chrysalis is set fast in its native soil, and its earliest efforts are all spent in breaking free from that unyielding matrix. They are tied to their hide-bound belongings by knots

which they find it hard to unloose, and which unites their hearts to a state of things from which the intellectual side of them is in perpetual revolt. This had never been Maurice Brady's case. With the exception of his affection for Alley—a very gracious and condescending sort of affection—he had no tender threads to break. His brother it would have been difficult to feel very warmly towards; and as regards Hurrish, his early boyish admiration for that redoubtable son of Anak had long become modified by a very clear-sighted appreciation of his intellectual capacity. Hurrish's primitive patriotism, for instance, was a source of immeasurable amusement to his more clear-sighted friend,—it was so inconceivably old-fashioned and infantine. His besotted affection for that wretched stony soil upon which he happened to have been born, was another trait which naturally moved his pity. Far from wasting any affection upon it himself, he would have been only too delighted to have been assured that he was never to set eyes on it again. *His* likes and dislikes were all rational ones, in fact, founded upon reason, not merely instinctive and animal-like. Even his hatred of England was a purely conventional hatred. It was the "correct thing" to hate it, and therefore he did so. He had a considerable gift of words, and could at any moment have risen to any required height of foaming sound and fury had he been called upon to do so; but it would have been a purely oratorical and dramatic fury. There was not an atom of uncomfortable heat or bitterness about it. It was a profession, and, as times went, not a bad profession either, but that was all.

All over Ireland this marked severance is growing up between the younger, educated or half-educated peasant or peasant's son, whose aspirations are all Americanised, progressive, modern, and the earlier, ruder type of peasant-farmer, whose union with the actual piece of soil he cultivates—or does not cultivate—amounts to a partnership; a vital union, like that of the grass and potatoes. Hurrish belonged to this elementary and elemental type. If you had offered him twice the acreage of the best grass lands in Meath or Kildare, in exchange for his naked rock, I doubt if he would have been even tempted to close with it. He was a sentimentalist—though he had never heard the word; and the ground which he had been born on—that hard, thankless, rock-bound ground—was the object of his sentimental worship.

As he walked home now along the rocky zigzag track which led to his cabin, he was thinking very anxiously over Maurice's piece of information about the Gortnacoppin farm. It was a very serious matter. Mat Brady was quite bad enough and troublesome enough where he was—witness to-day, when he had so nearly succeeded in wreaking his spite upon poor Lep, not to speak of those tumbling rocks, which Hurrish began now to suspect of having had some human agency behind them. How would it be when he held land which actually "marched" with Hurrish's own?—when at all hours of the day and night he would be in a position to wreak his spite and malice upon his unfortunate neighbours? Even this was not the end of the trouble he foresaw. Strong daring man as he was, there were points on which Hurrish, it must be confessed, was an unmiti-

gated coward—a moral one. He had an awe, not unmixed with secret dislike, for that unwritten law under which he, like every one else in the neighbourhood, lay bound and fettered; he had also a long-standing awe of his mother, and the two points showed a good deal of electrical affinity. If Brady was allowed to take this farm, he had a prevision that the results would be decidedly serious. From all that had taken place lately, and from the excited state of feeling in the neighbourhood, he felt sure that he would not be allowed to do so peaceably. He was detested, and was just the sort of man to be made an example of, since no foolish qualms of pity were likely, in his case, to arise to mar the absolute righteousness of the deed.

Now Hurrish, as already explained, had a dislike to murder in the abstract. He had a feeling, too, that if Mat Brady *was* made away with, the crime, or the suspicion of it, would certainly be laid at the door of his own cabin—nay, might be laid there not entirely without reason. His mother would assuredly know all about it, and would stir him up by every means in her power to assist — indirectly if not directly. Nay, he knew by bitter experience that it was not by any means impossible that he might be harassed into something like a passive participation in it,—a result which he honestly deprecated beforehand. Was there no way of stopping Brady from taking the farm?—that was the problem which he turned over and over all the way home. It was a very difficult one to solve, — the man's brutal courage, no less than his brutal pigheadedness, making it almost impossible to hit upon any hopeful

means of coercing him. At last an idea struck him. It was not very promising, perhaps; still, under the circumstances, it seemed worth trying. He resolved to put it to the test the very next day.

CHAPTER VI.

MR O'BRIEN OF DONORE.

If the cliffs of Clare are stern and terrible, its lakes are seductive and bewitching beyond words—gems whose beauty steals into the heart like love or sunbeams. Elsewhere the trees, wherever they once grew, have been swept away bodily from the face of the earth, a few stunted hollies, an occasional blighted thorn, the only exception. Around the lakes, on the other hand, and along the streams which feed them, there still springs up year by year a goodly growth,—oak and birch, holly and mountain-ash,—fighting a desperate, but upon the whole a successful, battle against the ever-marauding sheep and goats which prey upon them, and tempt the sympathetic looker-on to sigh for the fine old gristly Irish wolf, which—historically speaking till the other day—kept those woolly marauders at home by the terrors of his fang.

Donore Lough is long and narrow, brown and clear; with its tributary streams it helps to form the boundary of two very distinct districts. Northward extends the barren mountain limestone district of Burren, the horizontal rocks of which come up to the very edge

of the lake. Southward the grass-covered sandstones and coal-measures of Southern Clare begin, sweeping away in a succession of irregular undulations, now higher, now lower, until their farther course is cut short by the waters of the Shannon. The geology of a district matters, generally speaking, very little, save to the geologist. Eye and foot alike pass from one to the other without a suspicion of any change. Here, however, it is not so. The two formations stand face to face,—foes met in battle array, whose hostility may be read in every ridge, and knoll, and scarped hillside, the very wayside flower of the one disappearing often, as if by enchantment, when we pass to the other.

All the country visible from the shores of Donore Lough, limestones, sandstones, and coal-measures alike, belongs to Major or—to drop the now generally disused military title—Mr O'Brien. It has never been a very profitable property, and of late years it has produced hardly any margin at all. Not enough to keep up that big ugly house you may see rising with an air of ungainly pretension out of the trees to the south of the lake; hardly enough to pay for yonder posse of workmen, shouldering their spades and shovels, and marching off to their homes with the comfortable consciousness of having done about as little work in return for a day's wage as any conscientiously painstaking body of men in the three kingdoms.

Mr O'Brien was standing at the lake edge and looking about him as he had done every evening of his life for the last sixteen years. The dark-blue rippling water was washing the stones to whiteness at his feet; the young trees—nearly in full leaf—feathered down

almost on to its surface. Upon the other side of the lake lay a long stretch of blue-grey road, along which a small donkey-cart was coming towards him at the rate of perhaps a quarter of a mile an hour. Facing it upon the same road he could see a party of constabulary just breasting the brow of the hill, the reddish rays of the setting sun catching upon the barrels of their guns and the hilts of their side-arms. Fine soldierly fellows they were too, pleasant to see in their smart dark uniforms, stepping well together, tall, erect, well disciplined. Handy, well-disposed fellows moreover, as Mr O'Brien knew, for they were part of his own bodyguard, coming down from the newly-erected iron barracks on the top of the Gortnacoppin ridge. Their merits were not apparently what chiefly engaged his attention at that moment. His brow contracted, his whole face changed, and he turned away from the sight with a groan of unmitigated disgust.

Poor Major Pierce! Sixteen years had passed since he had returned to the home of his fathers, with a heart full and brains primed for its regeneration. They were not bad brains either, if not perhaps precisely the sort best suited for the work that they had undertaken. Clare, with its wild neglected hillsides; its lakes set like bright blue eyes in old and wrinkled faces; its tracts of naked rocks; its sweet rich snatches of pasture; its kindly, ragged, shiftless people; its tales of the fighting O'Briens; its vast cliffs and matchless breadths of sea and sky—that home air which a man never breathes save at one spot in this whole wide world,—all this had been very dear to him, and, in spite of all that had come and gone, it was dear to him in a sense still.

And yet what a failure! What a failure! Here he was, after those sixteen years had passed and gone, about the best hated man between Blackhead and the mouth of the Shannon. A man, the news of whose death would, as he himself well knew, awaken rejoicing bonfires from one end of his own property to the other! A man who was strictly forbidden to sit beside an open window, or to go abroad upon his own fields without a tame turnkey at his heels! Poor Pierce O'Brien! No wonder the streaks of grey lay so thickly around his forehead; no wonder his wife and daughter preferred Brighton or Bournemouth to Clare; no wonder that every post brought volumes of entreaties that he would leave that horrible, wicked, treacherous country, and come where he could live in peace and safety. Still less wonder, perhaps—being the sort of man he was—that he should set his teeth doggedly, and swear that, come what might, they should neither drive nor cajole him out of the country. Castle Donore of Clare was the proper place for an O'Brien of Castle Donore, and they might rob him there, or shoot him there at once and have done with it, but they should never have it to say that they had made him run away of his own accord.

His beard—two or three shades greyer than his hair—had grown longer and rather dishevelled since his womenkind had departed and had taken the conventionalities of life with them. Yet, in spite of this, and of a slight stoop which he had lately acquired, he looked a soldier still every inch. A close-cropped head, rather hollow above the temples, and rather high at the top, where the hair still grew

thickly; good, well-opened blue eyes, not large but kindly; a face which spoke of geniality and obstinacy, of amiability and irascibility—a very Irish face, too, though it was rather difficult to say wherein the distinctive Hibernianism consisted. The geniality and amiability, alas! were fast losing ground. Cares, worries, loneliness, were doing their work, the friendly blue eyes were fast becoming a mere nucleus of concentric wrinkles, and the hospitable genial mouth acquiring a confirmed droop at the corners.

Poor Major Pierce! Poor tenants! Shall we—ought we not perhaps in fairness—add poor "Government" that had to interpose between the two? What a hopeless dead-lock it all was! What a dismal concatenation of blunders, misrepresentations, prejudices—prejudices from above, and prejudices from below—prejudices which would have been laughable but that they were so deplorably tragic! In the eyes of the people about Donore—all, that is, but a few personal retainers—this poor, good-natured, well-neaning, utterly puzzled and half heartbroken man appeared in the light of an ogre—a sort of blood-sucking, land-grabbing, body-and-soul-destroying monster—who devoured widows' substances, and snatched the bread from the starving lips of orphans! One would laugh, but that one is really more than half tempted to cry—if crying, that is to say, would do any good. Major Pierce used to laugh himself, but latterly he had left off doing so. There comes a point in even the most ridiculous misfortunes, where the humour ceases to be entertaining—at any rate to the victim.

He walked on along the edge, under a wistful rose-tinted sky. The wind was going down with the sun,

and the stillness spreading. There was a low stone parapet at this part, with a few rotting stakes at intervals, to one of which an old black punt was attached. A little farther on a stream fell over some rocks, and the scent of the mosses and water-weeds rose penetratingly.

How still it all was! how serene! how filled with breathing from the very inmost soul of peace! Everything that was grim in the day-time, was mellowed now to peace and beauty. The grey terraced hills of the Burren shone with a pale spectral glow, which lingered upon their chiselled sides, as upon the bastions of half-dismantled fortresses. The same glow floated over the lake, which was golden in one part, and transparent black in another; the rushes and little upstanding water-weeds springing up, each in separate beauty, against this agate setting. Hardly a sound. Only a little lisp of water, only a distant leisurely rumbling, only a far-off cry of hurrying sea-birds. The ascetic dreamy beauty seemed endowed with a voice that was simply itself made audible.

The poor owner of these serene possessions was hardly as atuned as he should have been to their enjoyment! There was nothing, you see, dreamily peaceful in the outlook which lay before him! Only worries and more worries—only the bitterness of a mind which sees that everything it has set itself upon is going contrariwise; only a growing dogged determination to fight a losing battle, but to fight it out to the bitter end.

He turned away from the lake and the peace and the glow, and entered a narrow walk between tall, rather neglected-looking trees, which led past the gate

of a disused churchyard, beyond which stood a ruined church, deep on every side with nettles, and beyond which, again, could be seen the tangled opening of the wood.

It was quite dusk here, and the shadows under the trees were almost black. It was a little startling, therefore, as he approached the middle of the walk, to see a figure — tall, broad-shouldered, evidently frieze-coated—waiting for him in one of the larger of those patches of shadow, and close to the gate of the disused churchyard.

A bolder man than Pierce O'Brien, I may say, never breathed or fought. He utterly detested this protection forced upon him by a paternal Government, and expended a good deal of rather misplaced ingenuity in evading it whenever circumstances rendered such evasion possible. Again and again had he obliged those unfortunate myrmidons of the law, the "polis," to waste breath in an excited scurry over hill and dale before they could come up to their charge and take him under their bayoneted protection again. He did not even, for his own part, believe profoundly in this so-much-talked-of peril. If people wanted to shoot him, he had given them no lack of opportunities, and so far they had not availed themselves of them. Still, when you have been told for months past that your life is hardly worth an hour's purchase; that dozens of people are thirsting to pour your life's blood out upon your own threshold; when you have not only been assured that your execution has been formally decided upon, but even the gentleman who has undertaken that delicate office has again and again been confidentially named to you,—

it stands to reason that a suspicious stranger skulking about your avenue awakens livelier emotions than where you expect no more thrilling visitor than the milkman or the post-boy!

He did not turn back, however,—merely put his hand in his pocket, and produced an ugly sausage-shaped parcel which presently gave forth a significant click.

"Who is there?" he inquired.

"'Tis me, your anner—Hurrish O'Brien," came from the depths of the ominous shadow.

Mr O'Brien gave a laugh—rather an angry one—and put his parcel back into his pocket again.

"And what the devil, Hurrish O'Brien, do you mean by hiding in the trees like that?" he inquired, irritably.

"I was waitin' to have a private word with yer anner, Meejar,"—and slowly, like some unusually substantial ghost, Hurrish emerged from the deep blackness into the comparative illumination of the tangled pathway.

"Private word? What do you want a private word about, eh?"

"I'll tell yer anner that when we're to our two selves," was the cautious reply.

Mr O'Brien groaned. "More worries, I suppose! Hang me, if one is left in peace two days consecutively, it is a wonder! Well, come in here. We shall be quiet enough, Lord knows, there!"

He turned, and led the way into the churchyard, through a rickety iron gate, which gave out a discordant croak as if in protestation. A big horse-chestnut tree, one mass of flower to the very summit,

was lifting its crimson-tipped spikes above a pair of stunted yews, spreading thick black arms over the nettles. Skulls and cross-bones—cheerful and apparently inevitable embellishments of an Irish churchyard—lay about in corners, so greened over and harmonised, however, by mosses and lichens, that it would have taken a somewhat anatomical eye to have recognised them for what they were.

"Now, then, Hurrish, what is it you want? Be quick, man; I've no time to lose."

The tone was irritable, yet Major Pierce was not ill-tempered, nor even, as a rule, wanting in courtesy to those about him. Some allowance must be made for him. When everything that a man sees and hears is about as pleasant as a handful of sand upon a newly-made wound, it is scarcely to be wondered at if his tone grows querulous, and his style of conversation unconciliatory.

Hurrish was not to be hurried. There was a sense of solemnity to him in his mission.

"Furst an' foremoust, I want to pay yer anner the bit of rint,"—and he mysteriously produced a large canvas bag, which emitted a chinking sound.

Mr O'Brien glanced at it suspiciously.

"No reduction,—you understand that, Hurrish?" he said, sharply. "Reduction! God bless my soul!" the poor man burst out, stung by the mere mention of that familiar grievance—"do you know that it is forty-five years since a single rent upon the property has been raised? Do you know how often I've been advised to put another twenty-five per cent upon every man jack of you all round, and have always refused?—upon principle, mind you—upon principle.

Do you know that I am asked now to take thirty per cent reduction, the same that that fellow Maclellan who bought the Tullaloe property only four years ago, and whose rents have been raised twice since, has given? Do you know that, I ask you, Hurrish?"

"I do, yer anner."

"Very well, then I hope *you* won't begin talking about a reduction, because I won't listen to it, so there's an end of it."

For all answer, Hurrish poured out the contents of the bag upon a flat tombstone, and began sorting the coins into little heaps.

"Yer anner can count. 'Tis the same as iver," he said, in a tone of expostulation.

Mr O'Brien felt a touch of vexation, perhaps even of self-reproach. He was a generous man by nature, much more addicted to giving than to taking, if circumstances had only admitted of the possibility of such a luxury. It was the principle he fought for, not the dirty pounds and shillings. He liked Hurrish, and under ordinary circumstances would have scorned to drive a bargain with him. It was the word "reduction" that stunk in his nostrils, and fired his pride. It was the shibboleth for the moment of the whole battlefield.

"Oh, if you say so, no doubt it's all right, Hurrish," he said, as he gathered the money up, and shovelled it loosely into his pocket. "I can count it presently, and give you a receipt. But why do you want to pay me now, instead of waiting until the 20th?"

Hurrish, in lieu of reply, stuck his fingers into a small hole in the wall near which they were standing,

and dislodged a loose stone, which fell with a dull thud amongst the nettles. "I thought I'd as lief pay yer anner to-day," he said stolidly.

"Mr O'Brien asked no more. He knew better than to push the matter further. To do so would have been to tempt the door of that inexhaustible cavern of lies which is supposed to yawn around every Irish proprietor. Hurrish had a good reputation in this particular, it is true, but no man should be tempted beyond what he is able to bear.

"Thar's another matter I was wantin' to spake to yer anner 'bout." Hurrish paused and looked suspiciously round the churchyard, as if expecting to detect some unseen eavesdropper, his eye resting finally upon the skulls—safe and silent witnesses of humanity. "For God's sake, don't let Mat Brady have Maloney's farm!" he whispered, when he had apparently satisfied himself on this point.

"Why not?" Mr O'Brien inquired sharply.

"Becase, yer anner—becase—there'll be bad wark—the divil's *own* bad wark—so sure as iver he does," was the emphatic reply.

Mr O'Brien uttered an angry expostulation, and walked the length of the short path leading to the gate, then turned back.

"How the deuce am I to help it, I should like to know?" he inquired, testily. If any one else makes me an offer for the farm, I'm perfectly willing—if he is a solvent man, that is—to give him the preference. No one can have a worse opinion of that Brady fellow than I have myself—ill-conditioned sot! Still he has money—he is not likely to be short at rent-day; and I tell you plainly, Hurrish,

I can't afford to be out of pocket another farm. Why, God bless my soul, man! I might just as well have let the Maloneys remain in it if I am not to get another tenant."

"An' that's true, yer anner."

Mr O'Brien did not seem particularly pleased with this ready assent. He turned away with an angry "Pish," and walked back to the gate.

"Make me an offer for it yourself, if it comes to that, Hurrish," he said, when he had returned. "You're a decent, sober man, and it would throw the two farms into one, and make a good thing of it. Come, is that what you have been driving at? If so, speak up."

But Hurrish shook his head.

"Thank yer anner, I wasn't thinkin' ov meself," he answered, slowly. "I cudn't take the farm, not if 't was iver so. I've 'nough land as 't is."

"That means you're afraid," the other retorted, hotly. "You've got your orders, and daren't disobey. Eh?"

Hurrish made no answer.

"It is inconceivable to me how respectable, well-disposed men like yourself can let themselves be made the cat's-paw of such a pack of scheming, good-for-nothing rascals!" Mr O'Brien went on with increased irritation—"fellows without a penny to lose, who would throw you over like an old shoe the instant you had served their turn! Come, pluck up a little spirit, man, and defy them! You usen't to be a coward. Look at me! They've been threatening death and destruction to me for the last two years, and I don't see that I'm particularly the worse for it."

Hurrish fixed his eyes where he was bidden, not without a discernible touch of pity, then shook his head again.

"Now, Meejar, sorr, sure don't ye know there's things a man can do, an' there's things he can't," he said, oracularly.

The Major this time was silent. He knew it well enough. His position and Hurrish's were not so utterly unlike but what a certain amount of fellow-feeling was inevitable. The reflection did not tend to make him any better contented.

"Very well, Brady has the farm," he said, curtly. "I shall let him know to-morrow."

Hurrish's face was by this time invisible, but his attitude was expressive. He stood still in the darkness, a formidable figure—big, black, and silently expostulatory.

Mr O'Brien experienced that uneasy sensation which we all know, even on less weighty occasions, when we reject some piece of advice, backed by shadowy, but none the less ominous, threats.

"It's a new thing for you to be so anxious upon Mat Brady's account," he said, irritably, as he turned and left the churchyard, Hurrish accompanying him a few yards behind. "How long have you and he been such friends, I should like to know?"

"I don't care a thawneen, nor th' half ov a thawneen, what comes t' him," Hurrish answered, gloomily. "'Taint that I'm unaisy 'bout, anyway."

They were back on the walk now, and passing under the trees, through which a few white threads of light stole casually. When they reached the more open portion, Hurrish halted.

"I'll be wishin' yer anner good night, I'm thinkin'," he said, in his deep mellifluous brogue, rendered deeper than usual by his desire not to be overheard.

"Good night to you, Hurrish. Sorry I couldn't oblige you. You'll see me up at your house before very long."

"Thank yer anner. Good night, an' God save yer anner!"

When he went back to the house, Mr O'Brien was met by his old man-servant, who told him that the sub-inspector of police from Doocaher had called, and was waiting in the dining-room to speak to him.

Sub-inspector Higgins was a good-looking young gentleman of twenty-six or seven, whose dearest wish and dream of ambition had been to go into the army. This his father, a well-to-do London tradesman, had declined to allow of, but, as a compromise, had permitted his son to try for a commission in the Irish Constabulary, shrewdly suspecting that very little practical experience would suffice to cure him of any desire to continue wearing *that* uniform, while for any other it would by that time be too late. He was not, perhaps, what by very stern critics would be called quite a gentleman. Still, he was a harmless, well-meaning young fellow enough, and, under ordinary circumstances, Mr O'Brien would have been perfectly willing to show him every possible civility. Unfortunately, in one of their first interviews the young man had exhibited some of the importance of the newly-made jack-in-office, which the elder one had not unnaturally been

unable to stomach. As a magistrate, the police and the police-officers were theoretically under his own and his brother magistrate's orders. Practically, however, it was not so. The head-inspector and stipendiary magistrate, being the two officials directly responsible to Government, were the two in whom all real power was vested, the others being both actually and visibly ciphers—not one of the least vexatious of the many minor vexations of the times.

"Good evening, Mr Higgins," he said, as he entered the room and shook hands with his guest. "A fine evening. You wanted to see me about something, the servant said. Sit down. Take this arm-chair."

"Yes, Mr O'Brien. I—ar—" the young man had a very distinguished halt in his delivery—"I—ar—called to speak to you about—ar—yourself."

"About myself!" Mr O'Brien's forehead and eyebrows contracted suddenly. "Indeed! I am sorry that you should be troubled about so unimportant a subject. What is it?"

"Well, the fact is, Sergeant Flynn has been complaining to me—complaining rather seriously, Mr O'Brien. He tells me that he finds it absolutely impossible to be answerable for your safety if you persist in declining the escort which has been provided for you by the—ar—Government. Now I put it to you, sir, as a—ar—former officer, is it fair to subject those unfortunate men to the certainty of a reprimand, and the—ar—probability of dismissal, for a negligence which can scarcely, under the circumstances, be considered their—ar—fault?"

Mr Higgins had rehearsed this little address, and was not ill pleased with its effect. Upon Mr O'Brien the effect was exactly that of an application of mustard to a very sore spot. Three things especially offended him. First, the outrageous fact of a mere tenth-rate Government whipper-snapper like this young Higgins being in a position to lecture him—Pierce O'Brien of Donore—upon any subject whatsoever. Secondly, the undeniable fact that he *had* to some extent laid himself open to such an expostulation by his persistent evasion of his paternally provided protectors. Thirdly, the tone, air, and general delivery of the young man himself, which rendered that intolerable which under no circumstances would have been particularly palatable. If Mr Higgins had been an underbred and somewhat consequential young Irishman, the offence, though quite bad enough, would have been infinitely less; but being, unfortunately, a consequential and somewhat underbred young Englishman, the tone and accent with which the reproof was conveyed became part of the offence, and doubled its enormity. He endeavoured, however, to reply without visibly at least losing his temper.

"I am sorry to have to disagree with you, Mr Higgins; at the same time, I think you will admit that I am at least as good a judge of what is or is not necessary as you, with your very limited experience, can pretend to be," he said, quietly. "As you are probably aware, a considerable time has elapsed since any agrarian crime has been committed in this neighbourhood, and that being the case, if I —a native of the district—consider that the time

has also come when the inconvenience of a police escort may be dispensed with, I really think that is all that need concern any one, and so I shall make it my business to inform the Government."

Mr Higgins in his turn was not a little nettled by this reply. There was a touch of *hauteur*, particularly in the conclusion of it, which seemed to relegate him from the position of the full-blown official to that of the mere irresponsible under-strapper—naturally offensive to a young man whose native self-importance has latterly been fed with the sense of authority.

"My acquaintance with Ireland is, as you say, rather—ar—limited," he said, with a somewhat unsuccessful air of indifference. "Under present circumstances I should hardly be likely to select it as a place to come to for *pla-asure*, I must say. How much worse it is capable of being I don't pretend therefore to—ar—know; all I can say is, that it appears to me at present to be in a perfectly awful condition. 'Pon my word and honour, perfectly awful."

He really did *not* say "hawful," but the Cockney inflexion was none the less perceptible.

Major Pierce O'Brien's temper, already pretty well tried by the events of the evening, fairly boiled over.

"Then all *I* can say, Mr Higgins, is, that I wonder you ever thought of coming to such an awful country." The "awful" was again a perceptible Cockney awful. "As a native of that country, I am bound of course to express my gratitude. At the same time, I think you have really carried condescension far enough, and might now, without loss of dignity, de-

vote your evidently brilliant talents to some more congenial sphere of action. As regards my poor safety, allow me to suggest, with all due deference to your superior judgment, that that is a matter which entirely and exclusively concerns *myself*. If I prefer to run such risks as I may be exposed to in this *hawful* country"—there was no disguise or hesitation about the *h* now,—"rather than have the annoyance which seems to be inseparable from the present system of police protection, I have yet to learn that I am not at liberty to do so. I am exceedingly sorry that you should have had the trouble of coming here this evening upon so wholly unnecessary an errand. Mat, show Mr Higgins out."

Mr Higgins was shown out, and retreated with as much dignity as was compatible with the somewhat hasty nature of his exit. As he strode up the carriage road under the interlocking branches of laurel, his mind was very nearly worked up to the point of sending in his resignation. To have to live in an odious climate, to put up with the most villanously uncomfortable quarters, and to be called upon at any moment to perform the most unpleasant offices,—all this was surely bad enough. To be snubbed and insulted into the bargain, merely because you discharged an evident duty, was more than self-respecting flesh and blood could be expected to bear!

His host meanwhile remained behind, boiling over with unabated wrath. Oddly enough, it was the slight to the country which chiefly infuriated him! "D——d Cockney whipper-snapper, coming and ventilating his twopenny-halfpenny insolence in that fashion!" he ejaculated. Yet this poor much-

abused Mr Higgins had said nothing surely half or quarter as bad as he, Pierce O'Brien, had said a hundred thousand times over? True; but then he was a stranger, and that, it must be owned, made all the difference.

The sense of country is a very odd possession, and in no part of the world is it odder than in Ireland. Soldier, landlord, Protestant, very Tory of Tories as he was, Pierce O'Brien was at heart as out-and-out an Irishman—nay, in a literal sense of the word, a Nationalist—as any frieze-coated Hurrish of them all. He was furious with himself that he had not, while he was about it, given poor Mr Sub-inspector Higgins even a yet more emphatic piece of his mind. "D——d Cockney puppy! But I'll make him smart for his insolence! I'll report him, sure as my name is Pierce O'Brien! To come here and—and—and——" So he fumed to himself, there being no one else, unfortunately, to fume to.

His wrath, however, did not last long. It evaporated almost as quickly as it had arisen, and settled down into a sort of moody discontent, the normal condition of his mind of late. After a while he began even to reproach himself, not for having lost his temper, but for having done so under his own roof; letting the other leave Donore in a fashion and under circumstances which could hardly be called hospitable, —Donore! the very symbol formerly in Clare for hospitality! He went back to the empty dining-room, which he had left in the first exuberance of his anger, lit a candle, and walked round the gloomy desolate walls, looking at one thing after another, he hardly knew why. Then—setting the candle down upon

the mantelpiece—he stood with his back to the empty fireplace, gazing in front of him, his forehead puckered up into a fretwork of weary wrinkles. The old man-servant, who had been to the hall-door, returned, and started violently when he saw his master standing thus, with a candle behind him and the windows unshuttered, inviting—positively inviting—a chance shot. Mr O'Brien stood and watched, with a mixture of vexation and pity, as the old fellow went tremblingly round the windows, carefully shuttering and barring each in succession, until darkness, pure and unrelieved, had replaced the warm, widely diffused summer twilight. It struck him that it was pretty much what was happening to his own life!

"Poor old beggar, evidently he too considers that I require protection as long as I remain in this 'hawful' country," he said to himself grimly, as he took up the candle again and went to wash his hands, preparatory to sitting down to a solitary dinner.

CHAPTER VII.

MAURICE IS HURT BY ALLEY'S INGRATITUDE.

The appointed Wednesday came, and Maurice Brady duly appeared at Hurrish O'Brien's cabin,—"herself" (as the mistress of a house is always called in Ireland) being safe away at Donologue, where she had gone in the ass-cart with the spring chickens. Those poor spring chickens! How they clucked, and cackled,

and fluttered their hapless wings before being deposited at the bottom of the cart! It was a long way for Maurice Brady to come, even with a lift part of the way on the mail-car: he was in love, however—more in love, perhaps, than he was himself aware—and the obstacles recently set in the path of his passion had tended to make him more consciously determined to persevere with it than he had felt previously,—a sensation experienced by other lovers before him.

Alley's beauty was certainly enough to tempt any young man to obstinacy, especially one with ideas above the standard of his contemporaries, and not therefore to be affected by any want of appreciation upon their part. It was odd how little the girl seemed to realise it herself. It was as if the very beginnings of vanity had never been born in her. She was too humble-minded, dreamy, and nun-like, for that sort of eager self-admiration which flows spontaneously through so many young girls' veins, and of which love itself, when it comes, is often only the completion. It had been little fed by admiration either. From the bold admiring looks of passing strangers she shrank with the instinctive modesty both of her race and her own instincts; and of the little world around her, there were only two—Hurrish and Maurice Brady—who had ever even hinted to her that she was handsome. There are no doubt born nuns, just as there are born actors, or born violinists, and the type is more often to be met with amongst the pious peasant girls of the south and west of Ireland, than perhaps in any other class or country in the world. Alley had an elder sister who was a nun in Galway, and until Maurice had asked her to

marry him, she had often thought that she would like to join her, and to be one too. Even as it was, she sometimes thought with a wistful lingering regret of the life. It was so safe! Poor Alley's being one of those timorously sensitive natures to which the horizon of fear will always be far, far wider than that of hope.

She was simple-minded and ignorant beyond the dreams of even the most simple-minded and the most ignorant in more sophisticated regions. She could read, but except her national school lesson-books and a few penny lives of the saints, she had hardly read, or wished to read, a line; as to newspapers, she would not have glanced at one for the world. She was exceedingly devout, and one of the bitterest trials of her life was the impediments which old Bridget, with specially vindictive malice, was fond of putting in the way of her getting to mass upon a Sunday morning. Food and the shelter of a home she had from Hurrish, but not a single possession that she could call her own in the world. The ordinary incitement, therefore, to vanity of fine, or even what an English or Scotch peasant would call decent clothes, she had never had; and except that her red flannel petticoat was never ragged, and the coarse cotton bodices worn with it scrupulously washed by herself, no beggar-girl upon the high-road could have been more miserably ill-clad. This, however, she cared little about. She was inured to hardship. That native asceticism, too, which, under other circumstances, would have lent itself easily to the imposed severities of any religious order, helped her perhaps to bear the hardships of her present lot. She did not think about it, of course,

in that light, but it went towards making them seem not only inevitable, but natural—a very different thing.

When Maurice arrived, she was busily cleaning the cabin, driving the dust before her through the open door, to the surprise and evident indignation of an elderly hen—the anxious mother of a large family—who, tired with strolling over the rocks, into the crevices of which her brood were inconveniently given to dropping, had returned to the seclusion of the fireside, only to find it in this state of revolution.

Alley, as it happened, had a turn for cleanliness, though it was not often that she got a chance of indulging her tastes in that direction, her poor little attempts at orderliness being promptly nipped in the bud by old Bridget, who—pronounced democrat as she was in other respects—was a very conservative of conservatives as regards household arrangements, denouncing all variation from the traditional methods as "thrash" and "thricks," not to be countenanced for a moment by people who respected themselves or the ways of their forefathers.

Young Brady found himself a three-legged stool, and, placing it in the doorway, sat down, his legs clad in well-fitting tweed trousers, stretched out with an air of condescension across the threshold. Little Katty, the only child at home, had been bribed to keep quiet during the sweeping by the temporary loan of Alley's rosary—the one portable piece of property which the poor girl possessed—and was sitting perched upon the low wall which surrounded the little enclosure, running the red and white beads through her fat baby fingers with all the self-

importance and apparent unction of some stout lady abbess.

Everything in and about the house—even the chickens and the weeds upon the roof—seemed rejoicing in the absence of the reigning tyrant. There was a sense of peace and comfort, even a vague touch of beauty, about the little homestead to-day, which was more due perhaps to the lovely cloud-dotted sky and warm comforting glance of the sun than to anything more directly inherent to itself. Over the fields of rock around, the larks were singing jubilantly, one now and then dropping with a sudden hush into some gaping fissure, where, for lack of better lodgment, it had made its nest, and was rearing a brood of callow choristers. A warm but boisterous and self-important little breeze whisked round the house, astonished apparently to find anything standing against it. It sent the dust that Alley had swept outside whirling about in little fantastic curves and spirals, finally settling into a thick grey drift in one of the corners. The old hen had by this time returned, and was establishing herself and family, with much chuckling volubility, in the bottom of a broken chair, which had been half filled with straw for their especial convenience.

Marvellous the amount of rubbish of one sort and another accumulated within the compass of that one small room! Odds and ends of all sorts, domestic, agricultural, piscatorial;—a broken harrow, past its work, reared against the wall; odd boots of Hurrish's, still coated thickly with mud; fishing tackle, and bits of oars; pans of milk which had been "set" for butter, but out of which the cats and children were perpetually taking surreptitious sips. Everything that any

member of the family had ever used in their whole lives was probably to be found represented in some corner or other. No one, however, except Alley, ever thought that any of these things would be better put away into receptacles of their own. Even Maurice Brady—fastidious young man as he was in some respects—regarded it all as perfectly natural, and was not in the least offended or disconcerted by the utterly inconceivable squalor of the whole arrangement.

This indifference to squalor—rather the admission of it—is not certainly the pleasantest bit of duty which falls to the lot of the modest chronicler of peasant Ireland. Since it now and then has to be faced, however, it is as well perhaps to do so steadily and unshrinkingly, as we confront any of the other hundred thousand not particularly pleasant facts of life. Cleanliness and purity are words which admit, too, of more than one meaning, it must be remembered, and some of those meanings are not necessarily compatible with well-scoured floors and furniture gleaming with hand-polish,—meanings which might even not a little surprise those uncivilised ones to whom the floor seems a far handier receptacle for rubbish than a dust-bin, and who have no squeamish prejudices against the indoor society of ducks, or a cheerful, if vociferous, nursery of young pigs. When all is said, however, we must leave the ill to work its own cure. National idiosyncrasies are hard things to mend, and exceedingly awkward ones to meddle with. They yield, if they yield at all, very slowly—often almost imperceptibly. "We cannot measure worlds by rule, or put a continent to school," sings a poet of to-day; and perhaps even one small island may fairly,

therefore, decline to be lessoned save by the great head-schoolmaster—Time.

Maurice Brady was certainly not thinking of national failings at that moment, nor was he even thinking of his own budding ambition,—of the days when he, too, would stand amongst his fellows in the halls of Westminster, and fling the scornful defiance of an Irish patriot in the very teeth of the foreign tyrant. He was thinking of a much prettier subject, —namely, of Ally Sheehan's arms. She had given up her sweeping upon his appearance, and had taken up a half-knitted blue stocking, destined for Hurrish, the needles of which she was deftly moving to and fro in her small slight hands. They were unusually delicately shaped hands, though as brown almost as if dipped in walnut juice. Higher up, however, where her faded cotton sleeve had been pushed for the convenience of sweeping, a space of arm immediately below the elbow—a space not usually exposed to the sun and wind—was left visible, and no white rose-bud petal could well have boasted a prettier colour. The young man fixed his eyes upon it with an air of approval.

"Some of these days see if I don't bring you a dress, a real silk one, Alley," he said, in a tone of lordly decision,—"a light green, perhaps, or maybe one of those fashionable reds. Dress you as you should be dressed, and you'd take the shine out of half the ladies that come to Miltown-Malbay, or Kilkee either, that you would!"

Alley blushed a little and held her head down, pleased, but shy. Though he was her lover, Maurice was not usually prodigal of compliments.

"An' what ud I do 't all in a silk dress, Morry, dear," she said in her gentle sing-song western tones, so infinitely pleasanter to listen to than the hideous gutturals of the opposite side of the island.

"Do?" Maurice grew quite excited at the thought. "Begad, and there's plenty of things you'd do! Look like a lady, born and bred,—as I mean *my* wife to look, I can tell you; wear shoes and stockings every day of your life,—the best to be had,—and gloves too, and a hat or bonnet, with a veil, of course, when you went out in the sun. And you'd have a satin parasol,—a white one with a proper lining, and lace that deep"—Maurice's haberdashery experience lent, it will be observed, a certain amount of practical detail to his imagination—"and your dress down to the ground, and humped up so"—with a little necessary dramatic explanation—"for every lady, and plenty that's not ladies at all, has it so; and you'd walk along beside of me, picking your steps carefully and pointing your toes *so*, and when the fellars looked at you admiring like—as dozens would—you'd just look over their heads, or to one side, so—as much as to say that you wasn't aware they were in it at all!"

Alley burst into a peal of laughter — pretty, silvery, ringing laughter—which rang through the stony surroundings of the cabin, and made little Katty look up at her playfellow with an air of momentary astonishment on her rosy, dusty little face.

"Arrah, Morry, dear, 'tisn't me 't all 't all, 'tw'd be thin," she said; "'tis some gran' lady ye've seen at Miltown yer thinkin' ov! Sure how ud *I* know

how to wear a veil, or to put me toes *so?* 'Tis laughin' at me y'ar!"

"Not at all, Alley." Maurice's expression showed that he was in fact perfectly serious. "You don't understand me, that's all!" (He had perceived that in the enthusiasm of his last speech he had allowed his rhetoric to run into somewhat native variations, and was therefore additionally watchful now.) "Of course you couldn't be expected to learn all these things *at once*," he went on condescendingly, "but *I* should be there and able to train you, for I've watched how ladies behave often and often, and thought to myself,—'Alley Sheehan could give you all a start, and beat you easy if she had her rights!' Isn't that why I'm so *fond* of you?" he continued, in an explanatory tone. "Sure, if 'twas money, or that sort of thing I was thinking of, 'twouldn't be yourself I'd look at, when you haven't a ha'porth—I mean a pennyworth—good or bad in the world, as you know very right well yourself."

This time Alley did not laugh. She sighed instead, and let the stocking slide down upon her lap.

"But you've looks, and that's better," her lover went on convincingly. "I'd rather have ye as you are, than I'd have a common-looking girl with her pockets full of gold—and 'tisn't many young fellars in the country would say that!" he added, with not unjustifiable self-exultation. "I'll be earning me two pounds a-week before very long, and more than that, too, in another way,—I'd tell you how, only that you wouldn't understand me,—and then I'll come or send for you, Alley, and marry you right off; and we'll live in Limerick, or Dublin itself may-

be, and never come nigh these stupid old racks again, or be bothered with any of the people, for 'tis sick and tired to death of the sight of them I am!"

But Alley was not at all prepared for so heroic a measure of transplantation. On the contrary, a pang of dismay, for which she could hardly herself account, shot through her at the bare suggestion.

"Is it lave entoirely? Is it not see Hurrish 't all 't all? Och, Morry, sure I cudn't! 'Tud break me heart out an' out!" she exclaimed, with sudden panic.

Maurice Brady's brow clouded immediately. His expression, which had hitherto been all that was complacently kind and protective, grew suddenly hard and stern.

"That's a nice hearing for me, I must say!" he exclaimed, angrily. "To be told you're that set upon Hurrish, that you wouldn't go away from where you're so badly treated—not when it's to go along with *me!* 'Tis only what I might have expected, though. Women are all like that. No gratitude or feeling in them at all at all,"—with the air of one deeply versed in the ways of that perfidious sex. "And *I* that have been thinking of nothing but how soon I could marry you, and get you away from it all, and give you good clothes and mate—meat I mean—every day, and every thing you could possibly want or wish—and all at once to be told that you like your rags and tatters and bits of potato-skin and skilligolee—skim-milk—best! If you hadn't told me so yourself, I never would have *believed* it of you, Alley—never!" he added, in a tone of high moral reprobation.

Poor Alley was all penitence in a moment. Disapprobation from those she cared for was like the withdrawal of sunlight to a daisy,—it caused her to curl up her petals and collapse immediately.

"Sure, Morry, I didn't mane to offind you," she said, in a tone of deprecation, the tears beginning to collect in her violet eyes and to fall upon the stocking in her hands. "I'd go anywhere 't all wid you, —an' why not, iv course? But you see I'm only a poor ignorant colleen, an' I get aisily dashed, not bein' usted to shtrange people, or understandin' their ways or gran' talk the way you do. Me heart seems jist tied to the things I know—most of them, lasteways," with a recollection of old Bridget, to whom even her gentle heart was not perhaps very warmly tied. "I don't seem able to *think* even of goin' away—not altogether. I'm like thim little yellar shtrokes ye see round the idges of the say-pools, that go jumpin', an' hoppin', an' dancin', an' pullin' away, as if they was wantin' to be flyin' aff all over the country; an' all the while they niver gits raaly away from the whater, an' I don't suppose they're wantin' to, naythe r."

"That's because you have no imagination, Alley," the young man answered promptly. "I'm not *blaming* you for it, mind. If it isn't born in you, you couldn't have it—not if you paid a hundred teachers to learn you. Now I'm so different. Ever since I was a little bit of a fellar I was always planning and thinking and saying to myself, 'I'll do this, an' I'll do that, when I'm growed a man.' And I'd lay awake at night planning it all out—how I'd get all the larnin'—learning, I mean—I could, and not mind

the botheration of it, becase it would all be wanted, and more too, and I'd make friends with all the shmart young fellars I met, and not be sticking to the old ways—such as Hurrish and the rest of them here 'bout does—but have an eye open to see what was for me own good; for there's a grand time coming entirely for shmart fellars in Ireland, Alley, I tell you that—though 'tis little you understand, nor would, I s'pose, if I was to talk from now till to-morrow."

Poor Alley sighed, and was silent. The gulf of inferiority which separated her from her brilliant lover did indeed seem to her so wide as to be almost impassable. It frightened her, and made her wonder whether he could really wish to marry her. Surely she would be nothing but an encumbrance to him. He ought to marry one of those grand ladies whom he had been describing, who came to Miltown-Malbay or Kilkee for the bathing season, and who knew by nature how to point their toes and all the rest of those accomplishments which she could never, never, she feared, acquire. She had felt the same thing often before, though seldom, perhaps, quite so acutely. If at that moment he had told her that he had made up his mind to throw her over, I almost suspect that her first feeling would have been one of unconscious relief.

Maurice, too, was silent—lost, perhaps, in a beatific vision of future dignities to be attained to by himself; and in the stillness steps were heard coming towards them—a pair of iron-bound boots striking against the crisp edges of the rocks—and a minute after Hurrish's big frame and broad genial face were

seen over the low wall encircling three sides of the cabin.

Katty—who had been getting desperately bored with her plaything—threw down the rosary disdainfully into the dust, and started off in a short scrambling run to meet him, clutching him tightly round the knees before he could get inside the enclosure, and throwing her whole baby weight against his legs.

Like all big mild men, Hurrish adored his children, and Miss Katty especially ruled over him like a despot.

"Well, Kitteen, ye tormint, an' what d'ye want wid yer da?" he asked admiringly, stooping down and picking her up in his arms. "Will I toss ye away an' be quit ov ye wance an' for all?"—pretending to throw her up on to the roof of the cabin, where a house-leek—emblem of good luck—reigned over a green forest of wild oats and nodding grass. "Luk where ye've thrown poor Alley's bades to, ye bad gurl," he added, stooping and picking them up. "For shame ov yer, Kitteen! 'Tis a big shtick ye want yer dada to cut for ye,—that's what yer after. Well, Morry, me bhoy, how's yerself?"

Young Brady responded with friendly warmth to Hurrish's greeting, and they talked together for a while. He did not care to stay much longer, however, now that the party was increased, so got up before long, saying that he must be off, as he had a long walk before him.

Hurrish thereupon went into the cabin, and returned with a bottle and a tumbler, which he proceeded to half-fill with unchristened—*i.e.*, unwatered

—poteen, explaining, as he did so, that he had got it from Aranmore, where a barrel had lately been landed by a friend of his under the very nose of the Custom-house officers. It was one of Hurrish's idiosyncrasies—the most unaccountable of them to his neighbours—that he rarely drank, and had never, it was said, been known to be drunk in his life; though this statement is so large a demand upon credulity, that I rather hesitate to lay it before the reader. Be this as it may, to allow a guest to leave your roof without offering him a glass of anything would have been a high indecorum, not to speak of being the worst luck possible—a consideration which he was the last man in Ireland to disregard.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BREATH OF CELTIC ELOQUENCE.

The poteen was excellent, and Maurice Brady sipped it with slow enjoyment. He was no more of a drunkard than Hurrish, but he had a native liking for anything that was good of its kind, and—decent wine being unattainable—was necessarily a connoisseur in whisky. He refused another glass, however, and got up, saying that he must be off.

Hurrish proposed to accompany him as far as the turn to Miltown-Malbay, having something to see to, he said, at Tubbamina.

The parting between the lovers was rather cold,

though Hurrish discreetly retired to put away the bottle, and remained inside long enough to have emptied three or four had he been so minded. Maurice was loftily offended, while Alley was in a state of trembling alarm and apprehension, fearing to offend, and yet not knowing how to avoid doing so.

When at last Hurrish came back there was no further delay, and the two men walked off together in the direction of the sea. They did not, however, cross the rocks at the narrowest point, but kept away for some distance to the south, until they came out again upon the edge at another point where the cliffs were higher, and almost vertical. Here, by mutual consent, they paused, and stood for a few minutes looking down at what lay below them.

It was worth looking at! Not that these were by any means the finest cliffs in Clare,—not to be compared, for instance, to the cliffs of Moher a few miles further down, which lift their seven hundred and fifty feet of rock perpendicularly above the waves. For all that, it was such a cliff and such a scene as in any other part of the kingdom would have made the fortune of every fly-owner and inn-keeper within a radius of twenty miles. In Clare, however, people are used to cliffs, and do not, apparently, think much of them, its visitors preferring Lisdoonvarna, where there are no cliffs, but several brand-new hotels, and springs said to be excellent for lumbago, and where you can have the height of good eating, and drinking too, if your tastes incline that way. Three hundred feet below the ends of their toes the gulls were sitting by myriads—grey feathers upon grey rock — not to be distinguished,

save by a very practised eye. Higher up, where the rocks were more friable, puffins squatted in colonies, each before a hole which he had scraped for himself. Lower, the outlying rocks and skerries were black or brown with cormorants, stretching lean necks, and gazing ravenously upon the water, green as their own eyes. Beneath all these again the dark heaving surface was mottled and traversed in every direction by moving reticulations of white, broad in some places as the sails of a man-of-war, attenuated in others until they were no thicker than the thinnest of thin threads, rising and falling, sweeping rhythmically hither and thither, under the impulse from below. The wet rocks took the sun's rays upon their glittering sides; the spray rose in the air like the dust of a submarine explosion, and fell again with a thud that was like the fall of many fortresses, draining away through their twenty thousand mouths, and streaming back to sea, to be promptly caught and sent back upon the same errand again and again, and over and over again.

Familiar as it was to both of them, neither of the two men was wholly indifferent to the scene. Hurrish drew a long breath, and his eyes grew dim and misty. Maurice's, on the other hand, brightened, and his hands clenched, as the warm west wind sent its strong elixir through his veins, and breathed encouraging promises into his ears,—promises big with coming realisation. It seemed to him as if whole fleets of good things were being floated in from the West—the Land of Promise—fleets of which "shmart young fellars" like himself would be the captains, as by nature and reason they ought to be, able to turn

all opposing old fogies overboard, or string them up to the yard-arms if need were. He was an orator by nature as well as by calculation, and he felt that this wind inspired him. What a tide of eloquence, what illustrations, what denunciations, what gorgeously decorated hopes and anticipations, flooded his brain and rose to his lips as he stood drinking in that warm west wind—very breath of Celtic eloquence! If he had had a crowd about him at that moment, he thought excitedly, begad, how he *could* have spoken! how he could have thundered against the "enemy"; what "argiments" he could have used—arguments, it need hardly be said, addressed exclusively to the imagination,—so much larger and more interesting a field to work upon than any dull plodding faculties which demand that the arguments addressed to *them* should be proved, or, at any rate, provable. It really seemed a wicked waste of a magnificent opportunity.

Hurrish's thoughts had meanwhile got diverted to less heroic and more concrete objects. A little to the left of where they were standing, a narrow zigzag path led down to a small saleen—*anglicè*, little creek—famous for the supply of seaweed which collected there after every storm. A woman was coming up this path with a "kish" of oar-weeds and bladder-wracks upon her shoulders, which she had been collecting below. The last bit of the ascent was very steep, and the poor creature was evidently nearly worn out. Her face, bathed in perspiration, was expressive of a perfect agony of exhaustion. With a sudden ejaculation, Hurrish ran down to meet her, and, bidding her turn round, took the kish off her

back, and carried it in his hands to the top of the cliff. Even for his strength it was a considerable load.

"That was Marty O'Kelly's wife over from Tullalogue," he said, when the poor woman, with many thanks, had again taken up her load and trudged away. "You wudn't think it to luk at her, but siven year since she was as purty an' nate a gurl as ye'd wish to see—not a spryer at a jig nor a riddier at a wake in Clare! 'Tis a crool hard life on the women hereabouts, an' no mistake, God help thim!" he added, pityingly.

Maurice merely nodded. His thoughts were otherwise engaged, and he did not care to have them diverted to such uninteresting details as these.

"I'll be oncommon glad when you're married t' Alley an' took her away wid yer," Hurrish went on. "She's too dilicate an' purty for this work entoirely. Tis thim sort gives in first, and gits bated an' ould. 'Twud jist break the heart in me, so 't wud, if I seen poor little Alley lookin' all nohow and draggledy like that a one"—pointing to the retreating figure of Mrs Marty O'Kelly, of whom only a very short red petticoat, two lean brown heels, and a mountain of wet seaweed, was visible.

For several reasons Maurice Brady felt aggrieved by this speech. For one thing, it jarred unpleasantly with that high tide of sentiment upon which he had been floating so buoyantly, and seemed to drag him back to the mud and shallows of unilluminated everyday life. It brought back, too, the recollection of that start and look of dismay with which Alley had greeted his proposal of transplantation, and the double irritation found vent in his reply.

"You seem in a tremendous great hurry to get rid of Alley this afternoon, whatever the reason is!" he said irritably. "I'm sure, if I saw my way to taking her away at once, I'd do it, and be delighted. *'Tis* hard, I suppose, on a man feeding and lodging a girl that's no blood kin of his own, and so, I'll be bound, Alley feels too; but, please God, 'twon't be for long now."

Hurrish's broad face reddened with sudden anger. "Is it wantin' to be *rid* of her ye think I am?" he said, in a tone of sterner displeasure than the good-natured fellow had often been known to show before. "Ye niver made a greater mistake in all yer life if ye think *that*. 'Twud be like a man wantin' to throw away a little juwl that had come and pinned itself to his breast—he'd need be a born fool, or hav the divil's own black heart, 'ud do sich a thing. An' ye talk of her aitin'! Poor Alley! 'twudn't make the difference of a full-growed chicken an' a pullet all she'd ate wan way or t'other in the day, God hilp her! 'Tis her own swate self I'm thinkin' of, that niver complains, but wark, wark from marnin' to noight, an' allays a smoile for ivery wan! 'T'ull be loike pullin' the very heart out ov me brist to let her go; but sure, a man wud be no betherer nor a baste that 'ud think ov himsel' and not of a swate crather that's no more fit for harsh tratement nor the flowers, nor to be mixed up wid common folks 't all!"

Maurice Brady felt a momentary twinge of discomfort, almost shame—a most unusual sensation. He was even visited by a passing suspicion that Hurrish's view of the matter might be the higher, on the whole, of the two. He shook it off, however,

by saying to himself that Hurrish was so stupid and narrow-minded, he always took you to mean something entirely different from what you really did,—it was sheer waste of time talking to him. Of course, he must have Alley's interest more at heart than any one else. Wasn't he going to marry her—bring her up to his own level—make a "lady" of her? What stronger proof of affection could any man give than *that?*

The two men parted soon after this,—Maurice retracing his steps along the top of the cliff, skirting the heights of Moher, where the Hag's Head rose dark and threateningly against the sky, then rounding the grass slopes of Liscanor Bay, past Lehinch, to the greener and more commonplace stretch of country where Miltown-Malbay stands. Several times, in the course of his walk, Hurrish's words recurred to his mind, and each time with a fresh sense of annoyance. Hurrish! it really was too absurd! The idea of a fellow like that affecting to have finer feelings and a tenderer regard for Alley than himself! The idea was simply intolerable!

It was so intolerable that it was fortunately easy to prove that it was impossible, and before he had reached his destination Maurice had quite got over his temporary self-annoyance, and, as a consequence, had almost forgiven Hurrish. He was not a bad creature in his way, he admitted, and had a very proper appreciation for those above him; but when he came to talk of anything beyond his cows and potatoes—really it *was* laughable. He wondered now at himself for having listened with so much patience.

On going into his lodgings he found a couple of friends waiting for him, who at once began eagerly talking about a report that had come down from Dublin as to the chance of an election then pending. Maurice was regarded as quite the "coming man" in the political circles of Miltown-Malbay and Lehinch. His gift of speaking gave him that sort of direct influence which—common as that gift is—it never fails to procure amongst his countrymen, who, like the Athenians of old, live mainly by their ears. He was brimful, too, of all the socialism of the day, knew all the latest catch-words, and was a *doctrinaire* of quite the most advanced type. Though he had declined—chiefly from prudential notions—to join any of the secret societies established in the neighbourhood, he was upon friendly terms with most of their wire-pullers —more courted, in fact, than if he had actually committed himself. To a young man with not much to lose and a great deal to hope for, a state of social ferment, of "veiled" rebellion, is undoubtedly a highly commendable state of affairs. To the old, the timid, the owners of the perishable goods of this world, it may be a source of bitter trouble, anxiety, and consuming terror, but certainly not to him. Maurice perceived this fully, and had often reflected that the revolutionary elements afloat in the country made it —despite some self-evident drawbacks—a much more promising field for a "shmart fellar" who knew what was what, and had thoroughly realised his own good points, than a more settled and less fluctuating social condition would probably have been. In this sense, and to this extent, he was unquestionably and unreservedly patriotic.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UGLY NEIGHBOUR.

Meanwhile the position of affairs between Hurrish and the elder Brady was growing daily worse and worse. The rate at which hatred increases and develops, under favourable circumstances, has apparently never yet been scientifically ascertained; it increases, at any rate, not arithmetically, but geometrically, like the germ in the yeast, or the aphis on a rose-bush, which was one yesterday and is a million millions to-day. Take an originally brutalised one-idea'd nature, without a restraining influence of any sort —even the jail and the hangman—and plant in that nature the seeds of a hatred, the object of which it is continually being brought into contact with, and the result will startle even those who believe themselves experts in the darker capabilities of our poor humanity. Mat Brady's hatred of Hurrish dated from years back: he could hardly perhaps himself have said how or why it began, but everything that had happened since had gone to foster it.

That this result was not a little helped on by the raw whisky in which he habitually soaked himself needs no telling. Acting upon an originally amiable foundation, drink excites chiefly to maudlin sentimentality, rarely to violence. Acting upon a brutal foundation, it arouses the blackest of animal passions, which grow and grow until the drunkard himself becomes the mere slave of them, and differs little, if at all, from the homicidal madman. To injure Hur-

rish in some way, to have him in his grip, to wreak his vengeance upon him, was his one thought night and day; he lived upon it, ate, slept, breathed, and grew drunk upon it. In this direction his ordinarily sluggish nature was even spurred to activity, tortures unknown to Ojibeway Indians, or the familiars of the Inquisition, flattering his dreams and exciting his waking thoughts—tortures which he had inflicted, or was about shortly to inflict, upon the unconscious Hurrish. That these imaginings would long ago have been turned to reality is unquestionable, but for one deterring fact. Mat Brady—sot though he was—was enormously strong, capable of fighting any two other natives of Tubbamina. Hurrish O'Brien, however, was stronger still, and could easily have thrashed two Mat Bradys—had, indeed, already administered condign chastisement on more than one occasion,—as, for instance, when that amiable person had waylaid poor little Alley Sheehan, and frightened her half out of her innocent life, from sheer spite of her protector. Then indeed Hurrish's wrath had not been slack, nor his hand slow to smite!

Even the neighbourhood of Tubbamina—not a censorious region as regards violent crimes—was scandalised by Mat Brady's excesses. He had not atoned either for his failings in this direction by any marked virtue in another. His ill-temper and brutish misanthropy had kept him from sharing the predominant excitements and dangerous councils of his neighbours. He was not a member of any secret society—nay, was even suspected of having been more than once tampered with by the enemy, though of this there was no actual proof

What more perhaps than anything else infuriated him with Hurrish, was the indifference with which, as a general rule, that good-natured individual regarded his proceedings. Toleration is not at all an Irish characteristic, and is perhaps the mental attitude which an Irishman of the baser sort least endures or forgives in an antagonist. Abuse him, curse him—he answers you with curses readier and more fluent than your own, then goes his way, and forgets the matter. Pass over his attack in pity or contempt, and he will bear you a grudge to the last hour of your life.

His determination to take the vacant Maloney farm had originated wholly in the desire to come to close quarters with his enemy,—hatred of this burning kind, like love itself, not easily brooking distance from its object. That farm "marched" with Hurrish's; and the opportunities which a possessor of it would enjoy for harming and generally annoying that hated individual, filled his soul with spasms of ferocious delight. That he already occupied more ground than he was capable of working, and that the farm—even at the low rent at which it was offered—would be a loss rather than a gain to him, was nothing. Such trifling considerations were not even weighed in the balance. Mat Brady would have parted with every shilling he possessed in the world, and have brought himself to the workhouse or the emigrant-ship, if by that means he could only at last have wreaked his rage upon Hurrish.

They were not safe times for a man—no matter with how purely private a motive—to take a farm from which another had been evicted. No popu-

larity, no previous reputation for virtue or patriotism, would have made it a safe proceeding, and Brady had neither popularity nor virtuous reputation to intercede upon his behalf. The very day after he had formally taken possession, and had had his cattle driven into their new pasture, an enormous skull and cross-bones were found rudely daubed in black and white upon the wall which divided his old and new farm; and stepping out of his cabin-door early the following morning, he had all but stumbled into a sinister-looking trench, dug in the night across the path, and almost touching the threshold. It was as significant as the unstrung bow-string of the Chinese emperor, and not less likely to be followed by serious consequences.

With the one-idea'dness of your thorough-going hater, Brady set down both these demonstrations solely to Hurrish's account. Hurrish hated him; Hurrish would do anything to spite him; Hurrish, he was convinced, would kill him if he could; the only chance of preventing him from doing so, was by himself first killing Hurrish,—the whole question, to his mind, narrowed itself to that.

Like every Irishman of his class—whether Coercion Acts are in force or whether they are not—he had an old gun hidden away in the thatch of his cabin. This gun he now took down, and occupied his leisure moments in cleaning, scouring, and oiling it, and preparing bullets out of stray bits of old lead laid by with some such purpose. He even took the trouble of carrying it one afternoon under his coat to the top of Lug-na-Culliagh, the conical-shaped hill in which the valley ended, and there, safely

shrouded by the loneliness, practising at a patch of lichen on a rock, so that, when the occasion arose, his hand might be safe and his revenge sure.

All this he was able to do with the more ease that he was quite alone in the cabin—his ferocious temper rendering it impossible for any one else to inhabit it with him, even had he desired such company. His brother was away at Miltown-Malbay; the two men whom he employed upon the farm had cabins of their own; even the beggars, who find gratuitous food and lodging at every cabin they pass, hurried silently past Mat Brady's door, so effectually had his brutal reputation shielded him from demands which no poverty, however abject, is in Ireland held to be any excuse for not responding to.

When his day's work was over, he got into the habit of every evening betaking himself to that group of ruined oratories which, as the reader will remember, lay upon the vērge of the two farms, and there, coiled up in one of the cells built for the purposes of devotion, with his loaded gun held between his knees, he would spend long hours watching, waiting, on the mere chance of some accident bringing his hated enemy within his reach.

More than once he fell asleep at his post, and awoke in the grey of the morning, cramped, miserable, a prey to all the horrors of the habitual drunkard who, for some purpose, abstains for a while from the familiar demon. Even then, however, hate triumphed, and seizing his gun, he would crawl out of his refuge into the nipping night air, and stride backwards and forwards over the rocks, his eyes sweeping to and fro in the darkness, hungry, as the eyes of a wild beast

are hungry, when it fails to secure its prey. Twice he went down and watched the O'Briens' cabin all night, crouched in the shelter of the little "bohereen" that ran at the back of it. No opportunity, however, arose; Hurrish never appeared, and he was obliged, when daylight came, to withdraw, cold, cramped, wretched, and fuller of hatred than ever, to the shelter of his own cabin.

While he was occupying himself in this cheerful fashion, his own doom had been decided upon. Several farms had lately been reoccupied in the neighbourhood; an example, therefore, was badly wanted, and an example, it was decided, was to be made of him. He knew the penalty; he had chosen to act in opposition to it; nothing surely could be simpler or more conclusive. Between the judicial sentence and the carrying out of an execution there is apt, however, to be some delay. Brady was an exceedingly awkward individual to meddle with, and there was a general feeling, even amongst the men who clamoured loudest for his punishment, that some one else ought to be the person to carry out the sentence. Why Andy Holohun didn't do it, Peter O'Flanagan, for instance, couldn't possibly imagine. Andy was always talking of his hatred of land-grabbers, and here was a land-grabber ready to his hand, yet he showed no disposition to grapple with him; while Andy was equally astonished at the unaccountable backwardness of Peter. So scandalous a want of public spirit as was exhibited on that occasion at Tubbamina has rarely, in fact, been paralleled in the history of Ireland!

Maurice, as it happened, had been away from Clare

during this exciting time, having been sent to Limerick by the shop to which he belonged to select light goods for the approaching season, and it was not therefore until his return that he learnt what was on foot. When he did so, his wrath was great, and was directed chiefly against Hurrish, whom he held to be mainly responsible for this fresh outburst of popular feeling against his brother. If *Hurrish* would have left him alone, he said to himself, other people would have done so too. The latter was engaged a few days later in digging bait in the Donologue saleen, preparatory to an afternoon's fishing, when, chancing to look up, he saw Maurice coming towards him over the sands. The young man looked excited and fierce. His face was paler than usual, and his red moustache twirled dangerously.

"What's this, Hurrish, 'bout you and Mat?" he began at once, in a tone of violent displeasure.

Hurrish paused in his digging, and stood still staring at him with unfeigned astonishment.

"I dunno as there's anythink *par*ticular, Morry," he said mildly, resting one foot upon the spade while he leaned his weight upon the other.

"Anything particular! Why, I'm told there's been a meeting over at Tullalogue at the Harp of Erin, and a gun bought, and the lots drawn, and all, and 'tis you as is to do the job on him."

Hurrish opened his eyes. "Is it a *killin'* job ye mane?" he inquired. "Not batin', nor frightenin', nor the loikes ov that, but killin' out an' out?"

"Killing? Of course; what would I mean but killing? Much Mat would care for anything else."

"Then 'tis the biggest lie iver was tould—as big as th' ould Bull Rock out there," Hurrish said, slowly. "Sure I haven't been nigh th' Harp of Irin this month o' Sundays, nor don't mane naythe. That affeer of poor Buggle turned me stomack—so 't did."

Maurice Brady's wrath was brought to a sudden standstill. He had come over from Miltown-Malbay in a towering rage, determined to have it out with Hurrish; no one should meddle with *his* brother with impunity! Now, however, he was puzzled. Hurrish was no liar. His manner, too, was quite inconsistent with the theory of his having made up his mind to avenge his own and the community's wrongs upon the common enemy. It was neither hilarious nor yet morose, the two invariable concomitants of such a resolution.

"*'Tis* true all the same, then, whatever you may say," he answered, doggedly. "It was one as was there that told me all about it."

"An' how *cud* it be true, Morry, avick, whin I tell you 'tis the first word good or bad I've heard of it, an' have no more intintion of shootin' him nor ov shootin' me own mother? Not but what he desarves it," he added, parenthetically.

Maurice turned and walked a few steps off, irritably kicking aside as he did so the small round worm-casts which mottled the sand.

"Look here, Hurrish, and mind now what I'm saying," he said at last, turning round and speaking in that tone of authority which he had latterly begun to assume with his older companion; "I wouldn't have any one think I was forgetful—not obliged, I mean, for anything you did for me when I was a gos—

when I was a boy. At the same time, I tell you plainly, if you or any one else, I don't care who the devil 'tis "—(he was working himself up into fresh anger by this time)—"has hand, act or part, in meddling with *my* brother Mat, sure as God is above us I'll have his life! If there's justice in Ireland, or out of it, I'll hang him!—God, I will. I've taken an oath to do it, and I'm not one to be breakin' *my* oaths. Sure as we're standin' here, I'll do it, so now I've given you fair warning. Friend or enemy, it don't make no matter to me; I'll have his life. No one shall have it to say that he killed Maurice Brady's brother, and that he stood by and put up with it; I'd die rayther than have such a thing said."

There was no affectation about this violence. Cool-headed as he was, there were certain things which moved him strongly. Mat *as* Mat he cared little about, but Mat as *his* brother was a sacred object, and any one who laid hands on it should assuredly feel the weight of his revenge.

Hurrish drove the spade which he was still holding in his hands into the sand, and left it standing there. He, too, was considerably excited by the other's passion. It did not anger him as he would have been angered by most men's violence; on the contrary, he respected the young fellow for taking his brother's part, sot and irreclaimable savage though he was. He did not say, as a harsher or more experienced critic might have done, that it was because Mat Brady *was* his brother—that he belonged to him—that the young man's egotism was so rampant, that it extended to anything that touched himself, however little he might care for it personally; he simply

gave him credit for his spirit, and for his sense of family obligation—a trait which always wins respect in Ireland. If at that moment he could have made Mat Brady's life absolutely safe, for Morry's sake he would have done so, despite his own quarrel with that most obnoxious of Calibans. He did not see, however, that there was any way in which such a consummation could be accomplished.

"The buoys is terrible sot agin him, there's no denyin' that, Morry," he said, scratching his head seriously with an air of reflection. "Though I've had nought to do wid their meetin's, I've hard talk 'bout the country—plinty. 'Tis an essample they say 's wanted—lastways, that's what big Moriaty—him that's back from 'Mericay — says. No good won't be got for Oireland 't all widout thar's more *essamples*. Dades an' not words is what's wantin', and that's what the Laigue's wantin' too, he says."

"Then he's a d——d fool, and they're all a pack of d——d blundering savages, that's what they are!" the young man burst out fiercely. "Mustn't *I* know what the Laigue—the League—wants better nor they do?—ignorant beasts! I that am hand and glove with Mulcahy Donallen, that's own cousin to Mr Egan, and as safe to be returned for Ballynagaraty at the next election as if he was sitting in it! 'Tis the blunderingest thing ever a set of fools did, murdering here, and murdering there—and what for? Nothing but just their own spite and folly and devilments! Much they think of the Cause, the bletherin' idiots! If *they* was to be put out of it,—strung up here in a row, and only the decent *sinsible* men left,—it would be about the best thing could

happen to the country, and so you may tell them, with my compliments."

(Maurice's eloquence, it will be observed, had for the moment entirely got the better of his newly acquired phraseology. But what eloquence, it may be asked, is worth a rush that does not do so?)

Hurrish scratched his head again, puzzled, yet carried away by his companion's rhetoric.

"Well, Morry, ye knows more about it nor I do, *that's* sartain," he said, in a tone of conviction; "an' if the Laigue 'ud only give out the word to have no more bloodshiddin', nor maimin' ov baists, nor frightenin' ov women, nor nothink ov that sort all over the country from this day out, there's not a buoy 'ud be gladderer nor meself, so thar wudn't. An' as to what ye say 'bout Mat, ye may make yer moind aisy so far as I'm concarned. Me an' Mat has niver got on yit, an' not loikely for to begin to do so now; but as far as his loife goes, 'tis as safe for me as if he were th' holy Father—God forgive me for sayin' such a thing! Cum what may, I'll not forget he's your brother, Morry, me buoy; for there was ner a one I warmed to yit as I warmed t' you. An' why not?—you that was loike a chilt ov me own, in an' out allays, and that cute and cliver wid yer tongue, 'twas a wunder; didn't I allus say from the furst ye'd be a Gran' man? We mayn't be jist so thick now," Hurrish added, after a pause devoted to reminiscence; "'taint surprisin', so much as ye've larned, and such a gintleman born as ye look—speakin' so foine, 'tis a wonder t' hear ye—still for me yer the same, Morry dear, an' wud be if ye was the King ov all Oireland! An' as to threatenin' t'

hav me hung, an' the loikes ov that, sure I know 'tis the last thing ye mane! 'Taint *that* 'ud be stoppin' me anyhow, but the thought that 't 'ud be displasin' to you, an' t' Alley too, since what's yours is hers. Wudn't I cut off me own head, an' gladly too, 'fore I'd hurt aither the one or th' tother of ye?"

Maurice made no immediate reply to this unusual effort of oratory upon Hurrish's part. His anger was too fresh to subside readily. He was somewhat mollified, however, by the other's words. He had always been proud of his influence over this big, hot-tempered, warm-hearted fellow, whom everybody in the neighbourhood was more or less in awe of on account of his strength, in spite of its being qualified by his ordinarily easy-going disposition. Latterly, it is true, there had been more irritation than complacency in his relations towards him—a sort of indulgence and forbearance too on Hurrish's part, which grated at times against his pride. He had a feeling that Hurrish under no conceivable circumstances could be afraid of him, and Maurice was a man who liked to feel that he could inspire awe. He was annoyed too about Alley. Jealousy, under the circumstances, was, he assured himself, out of the question; still he felt irritated. That look of dismay with which his plan of transplantation had been received by her kept constantly recurring, and there were not wanting other incidents which showed Hurrish's influence to be greater than he considered it ought to have been. In the end, however, he made up his mind to accept the latter's assurances—provisionally, at all events.

"All right, Hurrish, I'll take it as you say," he

said, in a tone of somewhat condescending graciousness. "I know you're fond of me, and, unless you were led away, you would not wish, I'm sure, to do anything that was displeasing to me. Shake hands."

They shook hands—Hurrish melted, on his side, almost to tears by Maurice's goodness. It gave him the keenest delight to think that all was once more smooth between them. He had an admiration, amounting to absolute worship, for the other, which, when it inspires an older for a younger man, is probably far stronger and more deeply rooted than the other way. He was in a state of the wildest and most uproarious satisfaction all that evening, which, but for his known sobriety, might fairly have given rise to the most injurious suspicions. Poor Hurrish! His satisfaction was not long-lived, but, at least, it was warm and glowing for the time it lasted. While we are about it, let us, above all else, give thanks for that veil which hangs between us and our nearest future. Were it to be lifted—nay, but an inch or two—how many of us, I wonder, could confidently confront our pillows this evening?

CHAPTER X.

HURRISH'S CRIME.

It was the day of the half-yearly fair at Ballyvaughan, the metropolis, in some sort, of the Burren. Like a good many other metropolises, it is not par-

ticularly conveniently situated as regards that area of which it is the nucleus. Lying upon the seashore to the extreme north of the region, it suggests, and is, a fishing much more than an agricultural centre. The straggling single street sloping directly down to the harbour consists of some three or perhaps four dozen whitewashed structures, the more important ones slated, the rest thatched and overtopped in summer with a gorgeous nodding crown of wild-flowers—sedums, poppies, snapdragons—town-gardens of a distinctively Irish pattern!

Hurrish had some calves to dispose of, and had brought them overnight to Ballyvaughan, their chance of a good sale being naturally better if not previously overtired. Feeling uneasy towards evening as to what might be taking place at home with Mat Brady so close at hand, and himself away, he left the calves in charge of Lep and a herdsman, and walked all the way back to his cabin, arriving there about midnight, and starting again by cock-crow next morning.

Early as it was, every one was astir to give him his stirabout, and see him off. Little Katty came toddling across the floor from the other room, half-naked, and rosy with sleep, and seized him by the flap of his coat, as he sat upon a low stool hastily devouring that satisfying condiment.

"Dada, bring Katty sugey-shtick," she whispered, rubbing her little rough head, like some small tame animal, against his sleeve, and looking up in his face with an insinuating grin.

It was an appeal which Hurrish, even at his busiest, could never resist. He picked Miss Katty

up on his knee, and gave her a mouthful of the stirabout, by way perhaps of an instalment.

"Sugey-shtick indade! git out wid ye, yer imperint Kitteen," he said, admiringly. "D'ye think yer dada has nought to do but be goin' round the town gettin' you sugar-shticks! Be aff this instant minute,"—he set her down and got up himself, taking his blackthorn from where it was lounging at ease against a corner of the wall as he passed.

Katty however was not to be daunted. With a crow of delight, she trotted after him to the door, where she again repeated her demand, laying hold of the formidable blackthorn as she did so to enforce it.

"Alley, Alley Sheehan! Och, Alley, cum quick! I'm helt! I'm cotched! sure I won't be able to get away to Ballyvaughan this day! Kitteen's a houldin' ov me! Och, wirrastrue, wirrastrue, what will I do at all, at all?" he exclaimed, pretending to shake the stick violently, while the child capered and shrieked with delight at the other end of it.

Alley ran to the rescue, and picked up Katty, still capering and shouting, in her arms. Hurrish, however, delayed yet a minute longer to kiss the little red and brown face thus brought nearer to a level with his own.

"Maybe I'll be seein' Morry over beyant," he whispered, with a glance towards his mother, who was still by the fire. "Have ye ere a bit ov message for him, Alley 'cushla?"

Alley did not immediately answer. She twisted the stocking she had been knitting around the

needles, so as to keep their points from Miss Katty's wriggling pink legs, and looked down.

"I dun know as I have, Hurrish, an' I dun know as he'd care 'bout wan aither," she said, not coquettishly, but seriously.

Hurrish looked disturbed.

"Blur an' agers, Alley, don't be sayin' sich things!" he said, in a tone of eager remonstrance. "Sure the pore buoy luvs ye as he luvs his own sowl! he luvs yer very shady on the rocks, as any wan wid half an oye can see. Yer thinkin', I s'pose, he's a bit heady these toimes—that's what's in yer moind. But after all what wonder?—so much as he's thought ov—ivery wan in the whole counthry rinning afther him, an' consultin' wid him!—Sure if he wasn't a troifle 'bove hisself 't wud be *onnatural*. But he's the good heart Morry has, an' that's at the bottom ov all. He's not loike one ov thim darty *bodaghs*, so sit up whin they get a bit 'bove thimselves that there is no holdin' thim—loike an ass-cart wid a new sate, that takes itself for a coach-and-four—that proud, the spalpeens, they wudn't shtop and spake to the mother that bore thim! But Morry's not that sort, divil a bit. He's the good heart, an' that's iverything in this mortial world!"

Alley sighed. Hurrish must know best, she thought, but still—

"The fact is, yer altogether too young an' ignarant, Alley, to ondershtand the granjeur there is in Morry, an' that's the truth," Hurrish went on, in a tone of lofty superiority. "There is not the aqual of him in Clare—no, nor in twinty counties round, so there isn't. He'll be a gran' man yet, as I've telled ye

offen, jist you wait an' see if he isn't—the top an' king of thim all! An' thin sure 'tis yourself 'll be gran' too! Trath, 't 'ill be a wonder if ye spake to any ov us 't all!"

Alley smiled a little, but rather sadly. "I don't want wan bit for to be gran'," she said, almost tearfully.

"Och, Alley asthore, what's cum t'ye 't all? I know the most of the colleens does be allays changin' and choppin' ov their moinds, loike the sky, that's blue wan minute an' rid the nixt, but I thought you was betherer nor to go on wid sich wark. Don't ye know roight well that 'tis wicked to be choppin' an' changin' yer moind wid a man? Is it breakin' his heart ye want wid sich talk?"

Alley made no reply. She looked up at Hurrish earnestly for a minute, as if about to speak. Then, with a sudden blush, she turned away, and appeared to be absorbed in arranging Miss Katty's disarranged garment—a somewhat complicated task, one of that young lady's fat legs having just succeeded in getting through a considerable aperture in her little red flannel petticoat.

Satisfied that his exhortation had had its due effect, Hurrish pursued his way, turning up Gortnacoppin, alongside of its milky torrent, fed by the violent rain of the day before. It was a lovely morning. The sun was still low, and the rocks which overhung the path flung heavy violet shadows before his feet. Everything seemed to be either violet or blue,—a sort of spiritualised blue, such as these desolate limestone regions sometimes show in clear weather. The wet places, where a slow ooze crept over the rocks,

showed a faintly bluish iridescence, the blue-grey sheets of rock, the grey-blue sweeps of sky, the blue-grey sweeps of Atlantic—it was all steeped in light, penetrated with light, pathetic, solitary, ethereal—a spiritualised world, fitted, one would say, for anchorites and pious souls "enskyed and sainted," whose traffic is less with this warm substantial earth of ours than with the unfamiliar heavens.

Hurrish, his thoughts filled chiefly now with his calves, tramped on, his shadow flinging itself in exaggerated bigness upon the weather-worn surfaces, his iron-studded shoes awaking sharp echoes upon the level rocks. Trailing branches of pale pink spiny rose dangled out of the crevices overhead; masses of blood-red crane's-bill dotted the pale grey sheets of limestone, and the dwarfed bushes of hawthorn which rose out of the stony dykes were white with blossom.

He had reached the amphitheatre where the oratories stood, and where the stream disappears with a great rushing, bubbling noise into the bowels of the earth, when his eye was caught by a large object, conspicuously white amongst the surrounding greyness, lying close to a reddish granite boulder, raised, as many of these iceberg-dropped "foreign" boulders are, upon a foot or stalk of limestone, which, protected by its cover, has remained intact, while the rock surrounding it has been gradually worn away.

Striding up to the spot, he discovered that the white object was no other than a sheep,—one of his *own* sheep, stark, stiff, and dead, a hideous gash across its innocent white throat telling out too plainly how it had come by its end.

Hurrish loved his beasts, not merely for their

money value, but with that natural liking of a warm-hearted man for anything living that he calls his own. Next to his children, to Maurice Brady, and Alley, they were, perhaps, the things he cared most for in the world. A hot tide of anger rushed through his veins, and his cheerful, open face grew suddenly red and corrugated with passion, as he looked fiercely round in search of the perpetrator of the deed. As usual, however, none was to be seen.

He was still standing there looking down at the dead beast, when he was startled by a slight but significant sound. The thin clear whistle of a bullet whizzed past close to his head, and the next second the bullet itself fell flattened off the granite boulder beside him, while, at the same moment, the solitary valley rang with the report of a gun.

Hurrish started upright, and, with an instinct of self-preservation, ran to the other side of the boulder, thus putting it between himself and the direction from which the shot had come. He was only just in time! Another bullet whizzed by, grazing his shoulder as it did so, striking against the rock, and again falling deadened at his feet, while again the report resounded through the silence, dying away only when it had crossed the watershed, a faint prolonged echo returning with a hollow boom from the valley beyond.

Although a minute before the valley had seemed bare as a man's hand, no idea of supernatural agency on this occasion occurred to his brain. Leprehauns and ghosts are known to throw stones, and even to upset curaghs, but no one, even in Connaught, has ever heard of their firing a gun! The question which

now arose was, how was he to look round the corner of the boulder without thereby offering a mark to the enemy who had twice missed him so narrowly? A sudden idea struck him. Stooping down to where the boulder was raised, as already explained, upon a limestone foot or pedestal, in the same way that a mushroom is raised by its stalk, he peeped through the worn-away space below, and was thus able to command the whole of the valley before him. Straight in front lay the little group of oratories, the oblique rays of the rising sun gleaming upon their low grey roofs, and upon the white cross set as a pious symbol above the tiny doorway, and, underneath this white cross, in the very doorway itself of the one nearest to him, he saw a face—the red, repulsive, baboon-like face of Mat Brady peering out as an animal's face peers from its lair, the light catching upon the barrel of a gun which he held in his hands.

Hurrish's indolent, good-tempered soul was roused to fury in a moment at this sight. Mat Brady it was, then, that had fired at him! Mat equally of course that had killed his sheep! *Mat*, whom he had spared a dozen times after the most outrageous provocations! *Mat*, who, by the unwritten laws of the neighbourhood, stood condemned to death! It was the quarry attacking the hunter—the criminal assaulting his judge; the last drop in the long gathering cup of wrath! All the man's previous provocations rushed through his brain in a single fiery moment, as a flame rushes through a pile of inflammable materials. Every other consideration,—his own desire to avoid quarrels — his recent promise to Maurice,—everything went for nothing before that

suddenly uprisen fire of vengeance. Clutching the blackthorn in his hand, and utterly heedless of the danger to himself, he rushed from behind his defence, up the hill, over the steep rocks, springing across the fissures, straight upon the little pious hermitage, with its innocent small white cross, and that hideous brutalised face in the middle of its ruined doorway.

The suddenness of the impulse proved his salvation. If Mat Brady had kept calm, now was his opportunity. He had not provided, however, against the emergency. His gun was unloaded, and, being a muzzle-loader, required time to recharge. Unarmed, he was, as he well knew, no match for Hurrish. Panic seized his soul, and he sprang from his lair and turned to flee. To scramble through that narrow doorway, however, took time. Hardly had he got himself free from it, and begun to ascend the stony incline, before Hurrish's step was close at his heels, Hurrish's voice sounded in his ears. Then, like a beast, he turned at bay, and like a beast's was the face which presented itself,—the lowering brow, the huge jaw, the mouth distorted and gnashing with rage and terror! A hideous sight—to dream of, not to tell—a man in the likeness of a beast, worse than the very ugliest variety with hoofs or claws.

His gun being useless in any other way, he tried to club it: before he had time to do so, however, Hurrish had struck it out of his hands, and the next instant "crash," with one sweeping, annihilating blow, the blackthorn had descended like a sledge-hammer full upon his head,—not on the top, where the thickness of skull would have defied any blow, but a little to one side, full on the temple—that part, owing to

the position of his head, having come uppermost; and with an oath, strangled in its very utterance, Mat Brady fell backwards, and lay at full length upon the ground, his head striking against a rock with a dull hideous thud as he descended.

Hurrish remained where he was—the blackthorn ready for action—waiting to see him rise. He would not strike even Mat Brady when he was *down*. Minute followed minute, however, and still no sign of life. The echoes awakened by the struggle died slowly away, as a roughened circle dies upon a still pool. The uncouth body lay there quietly at his feet like a log that had been felled for burning. Could he be shamming death? Why did he not get up? What was the meaning of it? That the man could be dead, or even badly hurt, did not at first occur to him. Death from a single blow of a stick is almost unknown, particularly in Ireland, where the weapon is in much repute and constant practice. He was stunned simply—"knocked silly,"—and would get up again in another minute. He waited accordingly, expecting to see the chest begin to heave, the eyes to open, the hands to clench themselves—waited and waited. Minute slowly followed minute, but still Mat Brady neither stirred nor showed any signs of returning animation.

Puzzled, and rather startled, Hurrish at length stooped down over the fallen man, took hold of him by an arm, and lifted him into a sitting position. His head fell back, however, limply upon one shoulder, the other hand and arm hung down helplessly at his side, his eyes, partially opened, looked up at the sky with a hideous distorted expression, but without

any sign of life. A cold sense of discomfort began to creep over the other. He had seen dead men before —men, too, who had come to their deaths by violent means,—and he began to have an uneasy suspicion that this one before him closely resembled them; an uneasy recollection, too, that his own arm had come down with very unmistakable velocity.

Laying Mat Brady down upon the rock, he sped back to the stream, and returned with his felt hat full of water, which he dashed into his late adversary's face, then waited anxiously to see the effect. There was no effect at all! The water poured off the man's face as it would off a stone: not the twinkle of an eyelid, not the slightest quivering motion, followed the experiment. The sudden collapse of that mass of animal strength, a few minutes ago so brimful of life and of vindictive passion, had something terrifying about it. It was so utterly unexpected, that there seemed to Hurrish to be something uncanny, almost supernatural, about it,—like the trick of an evil goblin. The unbroken silence of the stony amphitheatre, too, was appalling. Had there been any one to share the situation, it would not have been nearly so bad. It was not the mere fact of Brady being killed, so much as the whole circumstances,—the suddenness, the unaccountableness of the phenomena,—that quelled him. He felt daunted, as if a cold hand had been unexpectedly laid upon him in the height of his passion.

What was to be done? that was the next question. If Mat Brady was really dead—and it must be owned that it looked uncomfortably like it,—then his own safety must be provided for? What was he to do?

Where was he to go? As to giving himself voluntarily up to the authorities, and explaining the unintentionalness of the homicide,—*that* idea, needless to say, did not occur to him for a moment. It would have been repugnant to every sentiment of his class, in whose eyes the law is *the* Arch enemy,—the one thing which it behoves every man, in honour no less than in self-defence, to avoid having any dealings with. There was a rule, however, for such cases—a very well established and habitually followed one. This rule was, quietly to walk away, and betake yourself to your customary occupations as rapidly as possible, leaving to the next passer-by the duty of finding the body, raising the hue and cry, and sending, if he thought fit, for the police.

Hurrish smiled grimly to himself as he thought of the police. Much good they would do! The strong arm of the law, the first thing that a man so circumstanced in almost any other country in the world would have thought of, was the last that troubled him. He thought of his own people,—what *they* would say and think. His mind glanced to his mother, and a sudden intense disgust filled him, as he thought of her satisfaction; of Alley, and he caught his breath in a prayer that she, at least, might never know his share in the deed. Then he thought of Maurice, and with that thought followed a rush of grief—of grief so violent that it seemed to tear its way through the man's whole body. What *would* Morry say? What *would* he do? It was not fear for himself which prompted the thought. It was the bitterness of feeling that he had been betrayed into doing the very thing that he had sworn

to Morry that for his sake he would never do, or allow, if possible, any one else to do. When he remembered the promise given only one short week before, he felt like dashing his own brains out then and there against the rocks. Not that he believed for an instant in any of those threats which the other had uttered. That Maurice, despite his own solemn declarations to that effect, would dream of denouncing him to the Government, was an idea which did not so much as cross his brain. To one of his bringing up it would, in fact, have seemed the one *impossible* thing; the thing which—no matter with what excuse, or under what provocation—no man could do without being branded as a traitor throughout the remainder of his life. It was entirely the personal point of view, the personal relations between their two selves, that made him miserable. The thought that he and Morry could never be friends again,—never, never, in all their lives,—nearly drove him mad. He had no hope either that he would fail to recognise his handiwork,—nay, he would almost have preferred that he should know it. That remorse and bitter accusing self-reproach which, as regards the dead man, hardly troubled him at all, he felt acutely,—as acutely as any man so circumstanced could feel it,—as regards the dead man's brother. He would have given all that he possessed, or ever hoped to possess in the world, to bring Mat Brady back to life again,—not for his own sake, not the least from any sense of the innate sinfulness of the deed, not even from any dread of the possible consequences to himself, but solely and wholly for the sake of his promise to Morry.

Odd thoughts, you will say, for a homicide!—for one whom the law, could it lay its hands upon him, would unhesitatingly proclaim a murderer; but they were none the less the first that did occur to him. An anomalous state of affairs begets, no doubt, anomalous ideas, and, as far as remorse went, Hurrish's ideas were pretty much those which would have passed through the brain of any other man in his position, even where provocation had not made his act to some extent excusable—nay, even where there had been no provocation at all.

Meanwhile there was the recognised rule, and to have a prescribed rule to follow is always an immense comfort and repose to the mind. With a calmness which, to those unacquainted with so abnormal a state of affairs, would have seemed incredible, he left the body and walked leisurely down the hill, crossing the dead man's own ground as he did so. He did not even think of breaking into pieces or otherwise destroying the stick with which the deed had been committed. He simply thrust it into the heart of a large furze bush, the first he passed, pulled his coat down, buttoned it over his shirt, which was slightly stained by his own wound, brushed off the mud and dirt which had adhered to him, felt along his neck to make sure that the wound was not of a sufficiently serious character to signify, then—without another glance at the dead man—walked away across the slope, and up the sheep-track leading towards the high-road. Then—remembering that it might be as well not to be seen there at that precise moment, particularly as he would shortly have to pass a police-barrack—he turned to the left,

threading his way between a number of boulders standing on end one behind the other, crossed the base of a hill,—its name, to be topographically accurate, was Cashlaundrumlahanah,—keeping its ridged mass between him and the road. Then—still keeping away from the main route—he struck off toward the sea, under a tall, nearly vertical sweep of cliff, and along a track which would bring him in time, he knew, to Ballyvaughan.

When within about four miles of his destination, what with the heat of the sun and his rapid walking, perhaps, too, a little with the emotions of the morning, he began to grow thirsty, so turned aside at Gleninagh to have a drink out of the famous well there. It was approached by a couple of stone steps, and covered over with an arch surmounted by a cross. Hurrish hastily climbed the steps, and taking up a vessel, left benevolently for the service of passers-by, drank long and thirstily. He was in the act, having done so, of putting the drinking-cup down again, when he suddenly perceived, with some dismay, that it was a skull; another and much older one, of which this was evidently the successor, lay a little way off on the ledge, half covered with green mould. It was not exactly a pleasant incident, especially to one whose morning's work had been what Hurrish's had been! It was a comfort, however, to reflect there was nothing actually unlucky about it. On the contrary, skulls were formerly, and in some places are still, considered absolutely indispensable to the proper efficaciousness of a holy well. By the time he reached Ballyvaughan, Hurrish, at any rate, had nearly forgotten the incident. The

fair was drawing to an end, so there was no time to lose, and in the course of ten minutes he found himself engaged in a brisk chaffer with a gentleman from Mayo, a large grazier, who wanted to get the whole of his stock of calves at at least nine shillings a-head under what their owner considered their value,—Burren calves fetching, as every one knows, better prices than those of any other district in Ireland.

Not merely was he not alarmed, but—save when he thought of his promise to Morry—Hurrish was not even particularly disturbed by his morning's work. He had not, of course, intended to kill Mat Brady, and in cold blood would never, under any circumstances, have done so. But this had been far from cold blood. The man had shot at him deliberately and treacherously from behind shelter, and, armed only with his trusty blackthorn, he had rushed upon him, struck down his defences, had brought the stick down—once—once only—upon his head. He had not even struck him again. That first sledge-hammer blow had done the work, and the man had fallen. To a great degree it was an accident, for who would ever have believed that a single blow, however delivered, would have struck the life out of that great powerful man-mountain? Hurrish knew nothing, it need hardly be said, about the mechanism of the human anatomy, but in blind rage, without calculation or thought at all, he had, as chance directed, brought his stick down upon the one spot in that huge mass of strength where life could have been extinguished by such a blow—as a hunter by good fortune may chance with his first bullet to

reach the one vulnerable spot in the carcass of some brute, which would otherwise have gored him to death. It had been the work of chance,—perhaps even of Providence,—and as such he accepted it modestly, without any self-glorification, beyond the habitual satisfaction he found in his own strength, but certainly without an iota of that horror, dismay, and personal remorse which would have filled the breast of a man less inured to hearing of deeds of violence. He even forgot it by moments, when the bargaining grew brisk and exciting; and although, when the calves were all sold, and his hands for the moment unoccupied, it rushed back upon him with vivid realisation, it was less with a sense of horror than with a feeling that a new epoch of his life had been reached, an important turning-point which it behoved him to guard carefully, so that he might not be led away by this one act into sharing others where the justification might be less clear.

Before the reader resolves to be utterly disgusted with this callousness, and to dismiss Hurrish O'Brien once and for ever as a monster of brutality, he must first kindly consent to take the circumstances of his life a little into consideration. We are all children of our environment—the good no less than the bad,—products of that particular group of habits, customs, traditions, ways of looking at things, standards of right and wrong, which chance has presented to our still growing and expanding consciousness. Hurrish's history must so far have been very imperfectly told if it has not been realised that he was well disposed and kindly above the average; pitiful, and disposed to use his strength for good

rather than evil. Yet the fact that he had just been guilty, no matter with what justification, of another's death did not—nay, *could* not—present itself to his mind with any of that sharply-defined horror, that passion of self-dismay and self-reproach, that it would have awakened in the mind of many a far less kindly and, in his way, conscientious man, who had been unused to hearing violence and bloodshed spoken of as the natural panacea for all the disagreements which may happen to arise between man and man. He would rather it had not happened,—when he thought of Morry and his promise to him,—very *much* rather. But as unfortunately it had happened, he resolved in his own mind that, as soon as ever he could with safety to himself, he would pay for masses to be said for the repose of Mat Brady's soul—feeling that he was certainly acting generously; for had not Brady been the aggressor? had he not come out that morning with the express purpose of killing himself?—an intention which only the merest accident had hindered him from carrying out. Moreover, if the matter had ended the other way, and he, Hurrish, been the one to have been killed, he felt perfectly convinced that Mat Brady would never for a moment have thought of having masses offered up for the repose of *his* soul!

CHAPTER XI.

ALLEY'S PUNISHMENT.

That horror and self-disgust which he was incapable of feeling for the act itself would probably have been strongly — nay, passionately — aroused, could Hurrish have foreseen the circumstances under which Mat Brady's body was destined to be discovered.

Early the same day, Bridget O'Brien's turkeys had taken it into their heads, as they had often done before, to stray away in a body from the house; and about an hour after the deed had been committed, and when Mat Brady's body was beginning to get rigid and cold on its stony bed, Alley Sheehan was walking leisurely up the Gortnacoppin path, and approaching nearer and nearer to the fatal spot.

Poor little Alley! She was enjoying her stroll in the warm sunshine, and thinking no harm of any one. She had driven the turkeys away from the vicinity of the stream, and they were now innocently engaged in pecking at the small white moths which rose in crowds from the trefoil growing upon the rocks, so that she felt she could safely linger a little out of reach of Bridget's eye. She picked a bunch of white mountain dryas and crimson crane's-bill, and tied them together with a withey, telling herself as she did so that they were for the children. She had so little idea that beauty was a thing admirable in itself, that she would probably have denied it had

any one asked her whether she took a pleasure in the arrangement of these vividly contrasting colours, set off, as they were, with a big feathery handful of adiantum, growing more luxuriously in those deep-sheltered recesses than in many a carefully tended hothouse.

The day had changed since Hurrish had come up the path, and the holy calm of morning had been suddenly killed by the sound of strife. The pearly light had given way to a broad serenity, rare in that storm-driven region. Not that the sky was cloudless. A great line of snowy cumuli, united at their bases, clear in the upper portion of their summits, was drifting slowly over the open spaces of sea and collecting in white packs upon the horizon. Against this opaque whiteness the three isles of Aran stood out with unusual distinctness; the circular mass of Dun Ængus—greatest and most famous of all surviving raths—showing its grey and broken circle upon the highest point of all.

Alley had too much of the Celtic Eolian-harp temperament not to be influenced by the character of the day and scene. With her it usually took the more direct form of devotion. Her pure, singularly transparent spirit seemed to float away in visions of faith and tenderness, which her very ignorance—if you will superstition—only made the wider and the more embracing. Certain types repeat themselves eternally at all ages of the world, and hers was the type of all those gentle ascetic natures which at every period and under all variations of circumstances have sprung up spontaneously. There had probably been Alley Sheehans here in Burren ages

before this one had been born, for these stony fastnesses, with the neighbouring ones of Aran, had for centuries been the resort of the pure, the pious, the pitiful, who had succeeded in escaping from that pandemonium of carnage which year after year, and century after century, had made the rest of the island a fit habitation only for some blood-besmeared rabble of hell.

What she would have done had her lot been cast in a different communion, it is difficult even to imagine. It was the central heart of that creed—that mother who is the type of all motherhood—which drew her and kept her upwards. Her prayers, those she used on non-official occasions, were an odd medley—half self-invented, and as elementary, therefore, as the cooings of a wood-pigeon, half made up of, to her, nearly incomprehensible fragments from the slowly elaborated ritual of Christendom. She possessed a little tattered 'Key to Heaven,' which, like the rosary, had belonged to her mother, and which she took to chapel with her on Sunday. The greater part of this work was as dark to her as if it had been written in Latin or Hebrew. Here and there, however, she managed to pick off a scrap, as a building bird pulls a leaf off a tree. There was the anthem and litany to our Lady of Loretto, for instance, which, by dint of much repetition, had acquired a sort of meaning—not its own meaning, doubtless, but something that did just as well, possibly even better. Whenever Alley knelt down to pray, a bit, from long habit, seemed to spring to her lips. First, perhaps, a bit of the anthem—"Despise not thou our prayers, but deliver us from

all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed Virgin!" Then the invocation, "Mother most pure, Mother most chaste, Mother undefiled, Mother most admirable—Mary, mother, pray for us! Seat of Wisdom, Cause of our Joy, Mystical Rose, Flower of David, Gate of Heaven, Morning Star, Health of the Weak, Refuge of Sinners, Comforter of all the Afflicted—Holy Mary mother, pray for us!"

There was something about all these grand words which gave little Alley a distinct feeling of pleasurable excitement, for, like most of her countrymen and countrywomen, she had an ear for the sonorous, and they were about the nearest thing to poetry she had ever heard. Her own mental pictures of the same gracious image were very different, however,—at once clearer and less definite. They had caught some of their traits, no doubt, from the prints and images at Tubbamina chapel, but were mixed up besides with the sun and the stars, the sea where it was calm, the flowers in the cracks of the rocks—a vague brooding image, unformed, yet real enough too to herself. Sometimes, when she had been sitting a long time quite alone, this realisation would grow curiously, nay even startlingly vivid, so vivid that if a white form had come slowly towards her over the level rocks, and a face—the face which every painter has tried to paint—had looked down gently at her with its eyes of pity, she would have felt more awe and wonder than actual astonishment.

In trouble especially her instinct was to fly to this refuge, as a small frightened creature flies instinctively to its sheltering-place. She was very troubled now about Maurice Brady, and Hurrish's last words

had brought this trouble into a sort of focus. She had never put it to herself whether she loved Maurice enough to marry him, for that was not the form which her reflection took, but she did ask herself what would become of her if she went on being so dreadfully afraid of him as she had lately been. When he had informed her that he intended to make her his wife, she had simply been pleased without thinking much about it; she had been only sixteen at the time, and young even for that not very advanced age. That was two years ago, however, and two years had taught her a good deal. She was not given to introspection—that, happily, not being one of the vices of the class to which she belonged; but none the less she had a feeling that it would not be well for her and Maurice to marry. She admired him, wondered at him, was proud of him, but in her heart of hearts she was aware that she shrank from his approach. Fear—even in a minor degree—is, to one of her gentle timorous nature, the worst probably of sensations, and it was one that she never could entirely get over with him. He was so authoritative, so hard, clear, decided in all his notions. That cold vein of egotism, too, which was an integral part of his nature, had made itself more clearly felt in their *tête-à-têtes* than at other times. The unknown is always invested with a mysterious terror in minds as naïve as hers, and Maurice's life, plans, objects, ambitions, and future, were all alike utterly unrealisable to her imagination. She had a feeling that in marrying him she embarked upon a new life, one for which her previous one had by no means fitted her,—that many things might be required of her that she did not feel able to respond to,

and from which she shrank back as a child shrinks from an unknown brink. She had no ambition—not even for fine clothes; she liked what she knew, and what she felt herself capable of understanding. This wild Burren—grim as it would have seemed to most people—had wound itself round her heart, as the first environment it has known does wind round a young impressionable nature, especially in one of her race. The little dells where the grass grew thick and rich; the wells full of offerings to their respective saints; the rifts into which she could plunge her hands, and bring them up filled with flowers; the isles of Aran opposite, where the saints used to live, and at which she looked in consequence with such reverence; the wild clearness of the sea, and great environing arch of sky—Hurrish's kind face, which seemed a part of it all. If Maurice would only agree to settle in some small cabin, quite close to Hurrish's, where she could see him every day, without having to be ordered about by old Bridget, then indeed, she thought, she would be quite happy, and not one bit afraid to marry him at once!

She had reached the point where the valley opened into an amphitheatre, and the cluster of beehive oratories rose solitary in the hollow, when she all at once remembered that this part of the valley was now no longer Mick Maloney's, but Mat Brady's property. Alley's terror of Mat Brady amounted to monomania. Never could she forget the day, now more than a year ago, when, happening by ill-luck to pass close to his cabin, the great red-headed, half-tipsy Caliban had suddenly darted out of it and had pursued her over the rocks. How she had run, and how he had fol-

lowed faster than she could escape, and how he had caught her, and held her fast, swearing at her for her terror, and exhaling a portentous smell of rank whisky! It is true that he did not actually hurt her. He was not, perhaps, even as brutal at bottom as many an English, certainly as many a French yahoo of the same mental calibre would have been; but he frightened and sickened the fragile girl with the horror of his presence, with the sense of her own powerlessness under the grip of his hand, by his loud voice, and coarse, grinning, baboon-like face so close to her own. It was like some delicate domesticated half-humanised bird or animal in the clutch of a wild ferocious specimen of its own species, whose wrath it has evoked and knows not how to allay. She had trembled like a leaf, and had implored him with tears to release her, which he for a long time had refused to do. At last, however, her tears and terror had had their effect, or he had not known what else to do, for, with a laugh of brutal triumph, he had flung her away so violently as almost to throw her down. Now, as she remembered that dreadful day and her own sensations, she glanced nervously round, fearing to see the uncouth figure of the detested Brady. No, thank God, there was no one in sight, and she breathed more easily. Poor little gentle Alley!

Her glance was passing away, and in another moment would have reverted to the flowers. But what —what was that on the ground?—huddled together like a heap of seaweed? At first it seemed to her to be merely a bundle of clothes,—some man had left his coat there, probably, while he was at work. It was too large, however, for that, she perceived on a

second glance. There was a boot, too—why should a man leave his boots behind him? The boot was so twisted and shapeless that it did not occur to her at first that there could be a foot in it. Still, she found herself looking at it with growing feelings of bewilderment and suspicion—that vague sense of something amiss which often precedes the actual certainty.

All at once her blood seemed to stand still, her heart to send great thuds upward to her throat; her knees knocked, her breath failed, and she almost fell to the ground with horror. It was only a *hand* she saw,—a large lividly white hand sticking out of the side of the bundle of clothes,—a hand flung, back downwards, upon the ground, the fingers hanging loose and half hidden in the grass and daisies. Poor Alley's very soul seemed to cleave together and die away with horror at the sight, the innocent grey rock and grasses to turn black and yawn suddenly under her feet, as if an earthquake had passed over Gortnacoppin. With the unwilling fascination of horror she looked and looked again at the horrible object, and now she could see a face—a grey distorted face—which seemed to be gazing up at her with its dull dead eyes. The lower part of this face was hidden by the shoulder against which it had fallen, but the eyes were wide open, and over them hung a mass of red hair—hair surely familiar to her? More than this Alley did not stay to see. The cup of horror was already full and brimming over; to escape was her only thought.

With a shriek—the shriek of a creature in extremest terror—she tore madly down the valley in the direction of the cabin. To get within reach of

some other living human being, to escape from the dreadful sight of those dead eyes, was her only desire. It seemed to her terrified imagination as if that formless, hideous thing that had been a man, had risen too from where it had lain, and was following her—nay, was gaining step by step upon her. On and on she ran, and always as she ran, there, close behind, she felt it still, always in the same attitude as before, yet somehow moving faster than she could, and gaining rapidly upon her. Every moment she fancied she might feel its touch upon her shoulder, might see that face peering into her eyes, those livid hands clutching hers, those twisted limbs in contact with her own. She flung out shriek after shriek of horror into the silent air, startling the larks as they circled in melodious rhythmic curves over her head. On and on down the silent lifeless valley, over the innumerable rifts and fissures, scrambling across the boulders, her feet hurt and bleeding from the stones—still on, on, on she ran.

How she reached the cabin, how she got the door open, she never precisely knew. Half crazy with terror she rushed into the house and up to Bridget, whom under ordinary circumstances she was too much afraid of even to approach, caught at her dress and flung herself, like a criminal escaping from justice, at her feet, hiding her face in the folds of her red flannel petticoat.

The old woman's astonishment at first literally deprived her of the power of speech and movement. The next it turned to anger.

"Quit yer holt this minite, ye cutty! How dar you be clutchin' at me like that? Is it shleep-walkin'

ye are, ye flag-hopper? Quit yer holt, or begorra I'll lay yer flat wid me pokar, so I will!"

But these angry words, which usually she would have shrunk from, had no effect at all upon the girl's mortal terror. She would rather have been beaten, rather have been killed by a living and breathing woman, than be left alone to that dread which was clutching at her very soul, and paralysing the vital actions of her whole body.

Twice she opened her mouth to speak, and each time her parched tongue refused utterance. At last she got the words out.

"Thar's a man—kilt—dead!" she stammered.

Bridget's face changed. A gleam of wild satisfaction came into her eyes. She caught the girl in her turn by the arm, and peered curiously into her face.

"A man kilt? What sort of a man is it, acushla? Till me quick, gurl!" she said, eagerly.

Then, as Alley's paralysed tongue remained dumb —"Is it Mat Brady? Whist, chilt, don't be dashed; sure what is there to scar ye? A man kilt!—trath, an' if that's all, 'tis scared enough an' more nor enough you'll be before you're much older, glory be to God!"

They went back together to the field. Great as Alley's terror was of the place, she was more afraid still of remaining behind. Who could tell whether the thing might not leap on her from behind the door, or fall headlong down the chimney, and lie there, staring up at her with those horrible livid eyes which would never, never close again.

No one had been in the field since she left. The

turkeys were still pecking at the moths, which rose out of the clefts of the rock. The bunch of ferns and flowers still lay precisely where she had thrown it down in her frenzied flight; the grey overhanging rocks were gay with sedums and crane's-bill; the larks were circling overhead, pouring down a rippling volume of clear star-like notes. Spring, even in the Burren, was revelling in a thousand dainty fancies. And there before them on the ground, amidst all this free, pure, beautiful upspringing nature, lay, horribly twisted and deformed, that miserable heap of clay which that morning had been a man.

Bridget walked straight up to the corpse, and stood looking down at it, wild gleams of triumph irradiating her witch-like face and black gleaming eyes.

"'Tis there ye're, are ye?" she muttered jeeringly. "Shtill an' cauld, an' qui't enough *now*, Mat Brady! D'ye know who's standin' over yer? D'ye know that Hurrish O'Brien's mother's lukin' down at ye? Ach, an' 'tis th' ugly corpse ye make! I wudn't have the layin' out of yer for saxpence, so I wouldn't, ye baste! A gun!" she muttered, looking down at the weapon, which still lay where it had been thrown upon the ground. "But 'twas na gun dun *that*"—looking at the corpse and the dark brown mark of the wound on the temple,—"na, na, na gun, but a shtick. An' a good man, too, 'twas hild that shtick, so 'twas. Hurrish? Na, na, 'twasn't Hurrish. Hurrish is too saft. Hurrish 'ud do most anything rayther nor he'd kill a man. Maybe 't 'ul be 'bout," she went on muttering to herself, as she peered eagerly around amongst the stunted hawthorns and low bushes of furze, which sprouted out of the clefts of the rocks.

Suddenly she gave a scream and a pounce, pulled a stick out of the tuft of furze, waved it frantically in the air, then, with the shriek of a maniac, fell plump down upon her knees on the ground.

"*'Twas! 'twas!* 'twas *himsel'* dun it!—himsel' alone an' no other! Glory be to God and the saints this day! Me shame's wiped out! Hurrish, darlint, yer old mither's shame's wiped out! 'Tis crying for joy she is this minute! Oh, me darlint son! me boy! An' I that thought he was too chicken-hearted for to kill a man! I wronged you, Hurrish, darlint! Core of my soul! where is he, that I may bliss him? Where is he at all, that I may get at him an' bliss him for this day's work? Hurrish! Hurrish, alannah!"

She had quite forgotten Alley in her excitement. Her withered face was alive with hate and love; her eyes blazed like live coals in the wrinkled setting. The girl, however, had understood, and her cheeks turned from white to red: for the second time that day she clutched her old tyrant by the arm, almost shaking her in her anger.

"How dar' you say 'twas Hurrish dun it?" she exclaimed. "Hurrish wudn't ha' touched him! How *dar'* you say Hurrish killed him? Yer a wicked woman, yis ye ar,—a bad wicked woman! an' I'll tell Hurrish meself on yer, so I will. *You* might ha' dun it, but Hurrish wouldn't,—he wouldn't hurt a fly. For shame on ye sayin' sich a thing! An' if I were strang enough, I'd bate ye for it, so I wud!"

It was a vulture flown at by a ring-dove! For a moment the old woman was petrified and almost cowed with astonishment. The next she sprang up,

seized the girl by the shoulder, and shook her as if she meant literally to shake her to death, then brandished the stick violently before her eyes.

"D'ye see that, ye little fool? D'ye see that, ye imperent cutty? An' iv 'twasn't for Hurrish hisself, I'd lay ye cold thar too for yer imperence—be my soul! yis. To dar tell me I didn't know me own son's shtick. Luk at that, an' say agen 'twasn't Hurrish dun it—God presarve him for it this day an' ivermore, Amen! An' if ye dar say word to livin 'soul, 'twill be the last ye spake on this arth, so mind that! 'Tis cauld and shtiff loike that ye'll be, ye insilint cutty! Staalin' into other folk's houses, aitin' their mate an' drink, and takin' away their good names!"

But Alley hardly heard the end of this exhortation. The sight of Hurrish's stick—that familiar stick, which little Katty had played with so innocently only that very morning—overcame her as no words could have done. Horror struck home to her; horror, and a sickening paralysing chill, which seemed to petrify her whole body. This time she uttered no cry, only a low gasping sob, and turning, ran back the way she had come, leaving the old woman alone with the dead man.

When she got near the cabin she paused abruptly. There was no home for her there—no home ever again anywhere in all this weary world. Hurrish had done this thing—kind Hurrish, whom she loved so much. *He* had done it; had beaten this man to death—perhaps when he was drunk—murdered him, and left him there, dead or dying, upon the rocks. The horror of it was too great, too impossible, for her

to contain. She threw her shawl over her head and ran wildly on, heedless of where she was going,—ran, ran, ran, as a creature runs after it has received its death-blow.

CHAPTER XII.

"HOW CUD HE BE THERE, AN' HE DEAD?"

It seemed indeed to Alley as if the end of the world had come. Father Peter had been preaching about it only a few Sundays before, saying it was near, and now, perhaps, it had arrived. To a loving heart sudden loss of faith in a being that it has loved is a catastrophe which needs no external one, no loud sounding crack of doom, to make more terrible. The idea crossed her mind of running off to Galway to the convent where her sister was, and asking to be taken in there. She was afraid, however. She would have to go to Ballyvaughan, and there take the steamer across the bay—a journey more fraught with terror to her untravelled imagination than any pilgrimage to Rome or Jerusalem to one of another bringing up. She simply ran and ran and ran, heedless of where she was going, till she found herself upon the shore, at the top of the rocks, which were here not of any great height. She did not even pause here, but clambering down, heedless of the sharp-pointed peaks, studded at their lower part with acorn barnacles, hid herself in a sort of cleft or shallow cave just within reach of

high-water mark. If she could only stay there for ever, she thought, wildly—remain there till she died —never see old Bridget again—better still, never see Hurrish—never see any one belonging to her old life! She did not think of Maurice Brady at all. She was too confused and miserable. Had she done so, however, it would only have been an added pang, for was not the man that had been killed Maurice's brother?

The cave was narrow and tapering, covered with an immense, nearly horizontal, block, which spanned it like the capstone of a cromlech. It was nearly quite shut in at the back, but at one point a little ray of light threaded its way through the rocks, throwing a pale yellowish illumination upon the floor below. To poor Alley this yellow light seemed like an eye peeping in at her, and she cowed down anew to avoid its gaze.

The tide was low, but had turned, and was creeping steadily up, its voice rising from time to time in a long choking sob. Every now and then, too, over the furrowed expanse of rock, a tall single shooting column of white spray would rise, towering like some great tropical blossom—an aloe or agave—into existence, and then dying suddenly down again immediately.

The sob of the waves, the hollow chuckling noises, the great white shining expanse of sea—all so familiar that no thought of alarm had ever mingled with them before—filled poor Alley to-day with unaccountable terror. The thud underneath, caught by an echo, sounded like blows struck upon the roof of the slab under which she was crouching. She thought it must be some one moving above there, and shivered

and crouched yet more closely down, heedless of the masses of dripping seaweeds and slimy red sponges which spouted at her out of a hundred gaping orifices. It was all strange, all new, all terrible to-day, as the most familiar scenes become when seen for the first time under the light of some blighting calamity. Terror was in her very soul—terror of everything and of everybody. What point had she to turn to? where could she look for help? Even God, the saints,—the blessed Virgin herself,—seemed to have changed their aspect. Hurrish—the one earthly being to whom she had hitherto clung—kind Hurrish, good Hurrish, who had taken her to live with him, who had been father and brother both to her,—Hurrish—impossible yet hideous realisation—Hurrish had done this. Hurrish was a murderer! She pressed her hands tightly over her ears, as if the very air was full of the horrible sound.

She had remained there crouched among the rocks for nearly an hour, stunned and hardly conscious of the lapse of time, when she heard the sound of some one approaching. Several times before she had fancied she had heard steps, but it had turned out to be only her own imagination. This time, however, it really was some one coming along the strip of shingle which lay between her and the sea. First a shadow upon the rock before her—the shadow of an elongated hat; then a larger and vaguer mass; then a crunching noise sounding above the hollow roar of the sea, and a figure in a suit of brown tweed appeared in sight.

Alley, who had shrunk back into the cave expecting to see a stranger, gave a faint involuntary cry at

sight of this figure, which caused it to stop and look up, and their eyes met. It was Maurice Brady.

He too stared open-eyed with astonishment. Of all places it would never have occurred to him to meet Alley here upon these lonely rocks, so far from home.

"Alley!" he exclaimed, wonderingly. "Why, Alley, whatever brings you here? Is anything wrong? You look scared and white. Has that old beast Bridget been beating you again? I wonder that you'd stop with such an old scawl-crow. I wouldn't, if 'twas me!"

But Alley, instead of answering, only stood still staring at him, white and stiffened with terror, like a little statue of Fear, at the mouth of the cave. Her hair had fallen loose, and hung in a dishevelled mass upon her shoulders; her poor little naked feet, cut with the stones she had run so wildly over, were stained here and there with thin trickles of blood; her whole attitude was expressive of only one thing—terror—as she fixed her great eyes upon the young man without speaking.

"What brought ye 't all?" she stammered at last.

Maurice gave a little laugh, rather an embarrassed one. "Well, now, 'twas a mighty queer thing that brought me, and that's the truth, Alley. The queerest thing ever happened to me yet, so it was!"

He waited, expecting her to express surprise or interest, but Alley said nothing. She simply stood and looked at him, all her remaining consciousness bound up in the resolution not to tell, not to tell, not to tell. That was her only thought.

"Sit down upon this bit of rock, and don't look so

silly and scared: you make me feel quite queer, so you do," the young man went on, indicating a recess where she was to seat herself.

Alley obeyed. She was in such a state of mental and physical collapse, that she would have yielded to any suggestion. She sat mechanically down upon the piece of rock in front of the cave, and Maurice seated himself beside her.

"Now, mind, Alley, before I tell you anything, you must give me your word not to repeat a word to any one," he began, authoritatively. "I don't know what mightn't happen if you did. They might put it into the papers, perhaps, with my name and all! Troth, if they did, I'd run away, and never come back at all, but go and settle maybe in America."

He waited to allow this dreadful picture of his own probable expatriation to sink into Alley's mind before proceeding any further. As she said nothing, however, but simply stared blankly at the sea, he concluded that she was still thinking about whatever it was that had upset her, and that he had better tell his story first, and exact a promise about keeping it a secret afterwards.

"The curious thing is that it should have been *me* that it happened to, for if there's one thing I've always set my face against, it's the rubbish fellars go on with about ghosts, and fetches, and suchlike old-fashioned talk. Now, if it had been a fellar like Hurrish seen what I saw this morning, he'd have been screaming ghosts and goblins all over the country!"

In spite of this assertion, a physiognomist would have perceived that the young man was not quite so calm as he would have appeared. Instead of its

usual self-sustained air, his face wore rather an unsettled and excited expression, and he glanced from time to time over his shoulder, with a slight air of suspiciousness.

Alley, however, noticed nothing. Her mind was enveloped in a mist—a mist that obscured all lesser objects — sometimes closing up entirely, sometimes opening a little way to reveal hideous visions, but never entirely disappearing.

"Well, Alley, mind now what I say about not a word of this to any one. I'd some writing to do this morning, so I got up early—not having to be at the shop till nine—and went down to the sea, thinking I'd do it better upon the shore, for the room I have is small, and there's another young fellar in it besides myself. Well, I got a nice comfortable place, much as it might be here, only instead of rocks it's all sand there, stretching along the sea for miles. I was busy with my writing, for when a man writes for the newspapers he has to be very particular, and I happened to look up for a moment, thinking of a word I couldn't remember. There was a sort of a gap in front of me, something like Gortnacoppin, only smaller, and, in the middle of the gap—are you minding what I'm saying, Alley?—in the middle of the gap who should be standing there but Mat, looking as usual, only a bit queer, as if he'd been drinking, and his eyes wide open, and a black mark on his head, just there, to the left of—I say, don't be clutching at me like that, Alley; sure I'm not going to run away—listen now! I jumped up, and 'Well, Mat, what are ye doing here?' says I, and went over towards him; but when I come to the place the devil

a sign of him was in it at all. So I thought maybe he'd dodged behind one of the hillocks, not wanting me to know he was there, and I went round, but no, not a sign of him there either; so I climbed up another big hillock there was, where I could see all round me and into the hollows, but not a sign of any one 'cept some sheep, and a little boy minding them; so I run up to him, and asked, did he see a man pass? and he said, No, ne'er a one had passed 't all that mornin', only myself—and he between me and the road, you mind! So when I heard that, I gathered up my papers like a shot, and back with me to the shop, and made them give me leave for the day, and off I come to see what took Mat there, or if it was himself at all. For it's the queerest thing ever I knew, and somehow I can't get it out of my head."

Poor Alley! Before one terror had begun to subside another had sprung up and taken its place! Her attention, which at first had wandered, had gradually grown more and more concentrated upon the narrative, and long before it had ended she was trembling from head to foot. Her previous expression of blank despair had changed for one of active absorbing terror. Her teeth chattered; her eyes were set like the eyes of a sleep-walker.

"My God, how cud he be there, an' he dead?" fell almost unconsciously from her quivering lips.

Maurice Brady started and stared—started and stared again. He had told her his story chiefly from an impelling desire to tell it to some one, no matter who—to get the thing, as it were, outside himself—certainly not with any idea that she could throw light upon the mystery. At this startling corrobora-

tion, however, panic seized him. Could it mean—could there be anything *in* it? Was it, could it be meant as a warning? Fear shot suddenly through his blood, like a stream of icy water. Alley's pallor, which he had been too self-absorbed at first to notice much, rushed back vividly upon his mind. *Did* she know something? *Had* she seen anything? If so—

"What's that yer saying 't all, Alley?" he exclaimed, springing to his feet and speaking in a tone of authority. "What d'ye mean by Mat being dead? How should he be dead, when he was as alive as meself three days ago? Speak up 't once if ye don't want me to think that ye're raving out and out," he added, stooping and seizing her by the shoulder, as if to arouse her.

Poor Alley turned her large terrified eyes upon him. What had she done? What had she said?

"Oh, Morry dear, don't mind me! Sure, 'tis distrarght I am, I dun know what I'm sayin' 't all!" she cried, clasping her hands piteously.

But Maurice's suspicions were too thoroughly aroused to be allayed now.

"You *must* have meant something, Alley!" he answered violently. "Has anything happened? Speak up—d'ye hear me?" he added, giving a slight shake to the shoulder which he still held. "Do what I tell you this instant: arn't I going to be yer husband? Do you dar disobey me? If ye don't tell me, begorra I'll take yer back to Hurrish, and see what *he* has to say. If I don't have it out of you, I'll have it out of him. And, by God! if I find——"

But poor little Alley had reached the point where endurance could go no further. The concentrated

anguish of the last two hours, and now Maurice's sudden unkindness, were too much for her. She fell back half fainting upon the rock, and lay there white as a little ghost.

The young man's anger was too vehement, however, for him to experience any sudden revulsion towards tenderness. He was fond of her, in his way, very fond; nevertheless his feelings at that moment were less those of pity than of anger at her inconvenient feebleness — anger at being balked in his desire to plunge into the heart of his mystery, which was fast driving him mad with anger and excitement. He was not particularly tender by nature, and his love, strong as it was, was for the moment too entirely in abeyance to anger for him to care very much whether Alley suffered or not. His strongest desire now was to get away. What was the use of staying with a girl who only cried and fainted? If anything really had happened, the only way to satisfy himself was to go and see. As soon, therefore, as he saw that she was beginning to revive, and that a faint colour was returning to her cheeks, he left her where she was, saying that he would be back soon, and started as fast as he could across the level platforms of rock, past Hurrish's cabin, and up the hill in the direction of his brother's cabin, which took him, as a matter of course, straight through the Gortnacoppin valley.

By the time he reached the rocky amphitheatre which had been the scene of that morning's tragedy, it was no longer deserted. A small crowd, chiefly of ragged boys and girls with a few women, had gathered upon the ridge, and were peering down curiously at

the dead man. Two policemen, armed with their guns, stood posted as sentinels on either side of the body; a party of four more, in front of whom walked Mr Sub-inspector Higgins, were coming down the path, their black official figures sharply defined against the pale-grey luminous background.

Until that moment Maurice had hardly known what he feared. Now he stood still, appalled by the sight before him—appalled by the sudden realisation of his worst fears. That that dark heap beside which the policemen stood was his brother Mat's body, he had not an atom of doubt. He put up his hands to his head, and staggered back against a rock, white, and sickened with horror.

His mind was not idle, however. Alley had known of this! That point was beyond a doubt. If she had known about it, who then could have committed the crime but Hurrish?—Hurrish, who had sworn so lately that for his sake nothing would ever tempt him to lay a finger upon Mat—Hurrish, who pretended to be so devoted to him! The certainty seemed to burn itself into his very brain. All the particles of evidence rose up one by one before him, and each seemed to strengthen and confirm that belief. Who would Alley be so anxious to screen as Hurrish? Who so likely to meet Mat here at the juncture of the two farms? Clearly Hurrish. Hurrish had done it; everything pointed to it. All at once the desire for revenge—hot, insatiable, all-devouring—rose and rose in his breast, until everything else became submerged under its torrent. Had he not sworn—sworn to Hurrish himself—that if any one laid a finger upon Mat, he should pay for it?

And now—by God! if justice was to be had, he *should* pay for it!

The second party of policemen had by this time made their way down the hill, and had joined the group below. He could hear the inspector's clear-cut voice issuing orders to his men. Suddenly he started forward, and hurried down the slope, pushing through the crowd—an inquisitive and excited rather than overawed one—until he, too, stood beside the corpse, which still lay upon its back, just as it had fallen when the breath of life had left it. His first impulse was to put his hand above his brother's heart; the next to try and lift his hand. It was already cold, and as stiff as if carved in wood.

The inspector was beginning to put the usual inquiries—who had last seen the man alive? had any sound of the struggle been heard? Suddenly Maurice started to his feet with an impetuous gesture.

"Don't be wasting your time asking no questions!" he exclaimed imperiously. "Go down to that house there and arrest the man what's done it, that's what you've got to do. This is my brother, Matthew Brady, lying here murdered, and the man that's murdered him is—Hurrish O'Brien!"

There was a start, a sudden "sensation" amongst all present. Even the policemen—most of whom had been a long time in the district—were taken by surprise, for there was no better known, or on the whole better liked, name than Hurrish's.

Mr Higgins alone was impassive. To him all these strange names sounded precisely alike.

"Who do you say?—Hurrish—H-u-r—— How

do you spell it?" he inquired, taking a note-book out of his pocket and beginning to enter the name in it with a stylographic pen.

Maurice disdaining to answer, the necessary information was supplied by one of the policemen, who at the same time whispered something into his superior's ear.

"Yes, yes; of course. What are your reasons for believing this man to be the criminal?" he inquired, turning sharply to Maurice: Mr Higgins never hesitated on duty.

A whirl of conflicting ideas rushed through the young man's brain at the question. If possible he would screen Alley, he hastily resolved. Her name should not be dragged into it if he could help it.

"I've reasons enough, and more than enough," he said, sullenly. "'Tis he that's done it. There's no more doubt about it than that the sun's in the sky. Every one knows that he and my brother are enemies —have been these years past."

Mr Higgins was rather perplexed. Over-readiness to proclaim the name of the guilty man had not hitherto formed part of his experiences of agrarian outrages! He was a zealous officer, however,—one to whom opportunities for distinguishing himself had hitherto, too, been rather wanting,—and he was not disposed therefore to allow the present occasion to slip from his grasp. Unfortunately there was a hitch. The local resident magistrate, to whom under ordinary circumstances application would have been made for a warrant of arrest, happened to be away, having been summoned to attend a trial in Limerick, and in his absence the nearest unpaid magistrate was

Mr O'Brien of Donore. Now Mr Higgins would have given a good deal not to have been obliged to present himself before that gentleman so soon after that last parting of theirs, the memory of which still rankled unpleasantly. Duty, however, was duty, and he was not the man to allow personal considerations to stand in the way of it. Desiring the policemen in attendance to remain where they were, and on no account to allow any one to approach the body until he returned, he accordingly reascended the side of the glen, followed only by a single policeman, and regained the road where he had left his horse.

Arrived at the top of the pass, he turned by a natural instinct to look back at the scene which he had just quitted. The sides of the valley were so steep that the groups below seemed to be almost vertically underneath. Fresh figures were descending the rocks on the other side,—three men and two women, the madder-red petticoats of the latter forming bright moving spots of colour upon the wilderness of grey. Below stood the policemen, conspicuous by their blackness, gathered together in a compact formal-looking group. And, erect beside the dead man, his arms crossed upon his chest, his pale handsome face set like a mask, stood Maurice Brady—an image of vengeance waiting for its victim.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN GORTNACOPPIN VALLEY.

Mr O'Brien was standing beside the lake, with his eyes fixed upon the surface. The poor man had been busy all day at different points of the estate, and had brought away a tolerably severe heartache from each. There were some labourers at that very moment employed in clearing out a ditch not far off, whom he visited punctiliously from time to time. He was his own steward as well as his own agent, maintaining, not unreasonably, that a property which could hardly pay its own expenses could still more forcibly not afford to be encumbered with a burden of annuitants. It was a gallant resolution, but it had been a bitter one to carry out, and the source too of some of his worst unpopularity. Labourers! Who that knows Ireland but has a responsive groan to offer upon the altar of that topic? Poor Mr O'Brien had expended many groans, but they had not been very fruitful ones. To obtain a fair day's work in return for a fair day's wage, was a feat which he had set all his pride and all his powers of will to accomplish. He had argued, pleaded, bribed, had done everything that man could do to procure that end. Needless to say, he had been beaten at every point. He had given up the contest now. He employed fewer men than formerly, but those few had as comfortable and satisfactory a time as any set of "labourers" within the four seas. Whereas, formerly, he had been rather

given to surprising offenders,—pouncing upon them at unexpected moments, and from unlooked-for points, —now, on the contrary, he was careful to make known his approach by loud coughs and other unmistakable signals. He was rewarded by invariably finding a magnificent display of industry whenever he approached—every man plunging his spade into the soil with a sort of desperation, as if a bet of a thousand pounds, at least, depended upon his individual industry.

At the sound of hoofs clattering up the avenue he looked round with an air of surprise, and a frown came to his forehead when he perceived his visitor.

Mr Higgins, however, gave him no time to speak. He dashed at once into the thick of the subject.

"I am sorry to be obliged to—ar—trouble you, Mr O'Brien," he said, reining in his horse beside him, and speaking in a tone of formality. "But I have come upon a matter of—*business*,"—the emphasis upon the last word was very emphatic.

Mr O'Brien bowed, and stood waiting to hear what the business was.

"There has been, I—ar—regret to say, an atrocious crime, a—ar—murder, perpetrated within my district, and—Mr Cavanagh being at Limerick—I am obliged to come to you as the nearest magistrate for a warrant for the arrest of the—ar—criminal."

Another murder! Mr O'Brien fell back a step or two, and gazed upon his informant with a face of horror. "Who is it?" he said, hoarsely.

"A man of the name of Brady—a tenant, I believe, of your own."

There was a discernible note of triumph, for Mr

Higgins had not forgotten their last conversation. Mr O'Brien, however, only heard the fact itself.

"Good God!" he said, below his breath; and then "Good God!" again. "The man is dead, you say?"

"Stone dead. I left the body where it was found, and expect to find the coroner there upon my return. The place is a—ar—valley about two miles from here."

Mr O'Brien turned away. The indifferent officialism of the other's tone jarred upon him. "Good God! Good God!" he repeated over and over inwardly. He had begun to lull himself into a sort of half belief that matters were really at last beginning to mend, and here now was a fresh crime, and at his very door. He forgot that the other man was waiting—forgot everything but the fact itself. It had been a common enough occurrence for him to have got "used," perhaps, as people say, to it, but who ever really succeeds in getting "used" to such incidents? His horror was not quite impersonal either. It was *he* who had put this man Brady into that farm for the occupying of which he had doubtless met his death. Against advice too he had done it. Hurrish's words, "There'll be bad wark—the divil's *own* bad wark!" came back vividly to his mind. The devil's own work, indeed! Was the country given over then to devils? Were they all in a league together? Was there never, *never* to be an end of these horrors which blackened the very name of Irishman?

"What did you say about wanting a warrant against some one,—who is it?" he inquired, turning eagerly to Mr Higgins, whose face expressed his ill-restrained impatience.

"A man called—ar—O'Brien,—Hurrish O'Brien."

The other man also called O'Brien fell back, and stared at the inspector with an air of stupefaction. "Nonsense!" he exclaimed at last, indignantly. "Hurrish O'Brien! Nonsense! Impossible!"

Mr Higgins stiffened his chin. "It is the man's own brother who has given the evidence," he said.

"What man's brother?"

"The murdered man's."

"'Tis a lie then, whoever says it! Why, I've known Hurrish O'Brien ever since he was that high. He would be as incapable of killing a man in cold blood as I should myself!"

Mr Higgins shrugged his shoulders. "Let us hope it—ar—is so," he said. "In the meanwhile the evidence seems to me to be of a—ar—very serious character. May I trouble you to sign this warrant. You will see that it is ready filled up. Allow me to offer you a stilo."

Mr O'Brien took no notice of the stilo. "I tell you, I totally disbelieve in Hurrish O'Brien having anything to say to it," he said angrily.

Mr Higgins smiled serenely.

"*Totally* disbelieve in it, do you hear?" the other repeated.

Mr Higgins smiled again. "You will scarcely decline to sign the warrant upon that account, I—ar—presume?" he said significantly.

It was the wrong note to strike. This insistent officialism was exactly calculated to set Mr O'Brien's pride bristling at once.

"On the contrary, that is precisely what I *do* decline to do," he said curtly. "If upon further exam-

ination the man is found to be guilty,—which I totally disbelieve,—there will be plenty of time to arrest him then. If not—as I am convinced will turn out to be the case—the Government will be spared another blunder brought upon it by the zeal of its officials. I decline to sign a warrant for the committal of a man whom I believe to be as innocent as myself."

Mr Higgins was genuinely incapable of answering. New as he was to this work, he was an official to the backbone, and that any one would refuse an official demand was an idea which had never entered into his imagination.

"You—ar—decline!" he exclaimed, in a tone of stupefaction.

"Emphatically. I wish you good morning, Mr Higgins; you will excuse me,—my men are waiting for me in the next field,"—and away walked Mr O'Brien across the grass.

To describe Mr Higgins's feelings as he rode back with the still unsigned warrant in his pocket, would be beyond my powers. The refusal was in his eyes rather a grosser violation of law, if anything, than the murder itself. Refuse to sign a warrant! Refuse to support the authority of the constabulary! The man must be *mad*. There could be no other explanation! It is true that it was not necessary, in strict law, to obtain a magistrate's warrant before arresting a supposed criminal,—the constabulary being perfectly free to do so without one. They did it in that case, however, at their own risk, and there had not been wanting cases lately where such an excess of zeal had been rewarded with anything but comfortable consequences. On the whole, therefore, he decided, though

against his will, to delay taking any further steps until Mr Cavanagh's return from Limerick, which was fortunately expected that very evening. But if this fellow O'Brien took the opportunity of escaping in the meanwhile? Mr Higgins's feeling was that in that case his namesake ought to be tried, and if necessary hanged, in his place!

By the time he got back a much larger crowd had collected in the amphitheatre,—the news of the deed having spread with the rapidity with which such news seems invariably endowed. It had awakened some excitement and more curiosity, so that gradually every one belonging to Tubbamina, with the exception of those away at Ballyvaughan for the fair, had gathered around the spot. To none did the news come with more startling surprise than to the very men who, as will be remembered, had undertaken that duty themselves, but had been prevented by a succession of such accidents as will occur even in the best regulated societies. Andy Holohun was at first disposed to give the credit of the achievement to Peter O'Flanagan, and Peter O'Flanagan to Andy Holohun. When, upon further inquiries, passed rapidly from mouth to mouth and ear to ear, it turned out that neither of these heroes could claim the credit, the perplexity and excitement deepened perceptibly. As for Hurrish O'Brien, no one at first even thought of him. He had put up with Mat Brady's provocations so long, that his patience had become a sort of local proverb; and although at the drawing of lots it had been arranged that the lot should fall upon him, it had been more a sort of support to other backsliders, than from the slightest expectation that he would really

undertake the office. When, therefore, it became known that Maurice Brady had actually denounced him, and had demanded that a warrant should be taken out against him, a thrill of genuine excitement ran through the whole assembly. Every one liked Hurrish; every one was aware of the sum of indebtedness which Maurice Brady owed to him. Murder is a trifle, but ingratitude of this sort is a crime which strikes with the fullest possible effect upon an Irish imagination.

Long before the coroner had arrived, measures had been taken to warn Hurrish. A boy had been secretly despatched to Ballyvaughan, to let him know what was on foot, so that if he decided to escape he could do so, or at any rate could keep out of the way until after the coroner had sat. When that important official at last appeared upon the scene, there was a general slipping away on the part of all the men present, none of whom particularly desired being called upon to serve on the jury. It was not, therefore, without some difficulty and considerable delay that the necessary dozen demanded by the law were secured, and marched down the hill under the charge of an escort of police.

A wilder, more essentially law-defying dozen were rarely perhaps gathered together at the command of the law. Some of the men looked scared; others fierce and excited; others again sullen and indifferent; while some, including the two recreants Andy Holohun and Peter O'Flanagan, were evidently rather pleased and tickled by the whole proceeding. Not a few of the jurymen were in absolute rags,—tatterdemalion loafers at the corners of the street, and hangers-

on upon the charity of others. Several were very old men, wearing the knee-breeches and tail-coats of a generation ago, amongst whom was our old acquaintance Phil Rooney, who had been attracted like others to the scene, and been promptly pounced upon as a "dacent" man, less likely than others to give a verdict in direct opposition to the evidence. No intelligence or educational qualification, however, is required in a jury of this kind. Indeed poor Thady-na-Taggart was one of the original dozen, and only escaped by taking to his heels, and starting across the rocks at a pace which the official who had secured him did not see his way to imitating.

When all were collected, they were marched down to take up their places at the bottom of the amphitheatre, where the coroner, Mr Higgins, and Maurice Brady were already assembled, — the constabulary, who had by this time been recruited by others from a more distant barracks, keeping order, and preventing the crowd from pressing too closely upon the group around the body.

A strange scene truly!—characteristic of people, country, times! On one side the dozen unwilling ministers of the law—whole-coated or ragged-coated, as the case might be; on the other the coroner, a stout little man in a suit of rusty black, with a pock-marked, dim-complexioned face, imperceptible nose, and air of vulgar importance. Beside him Mr Higgins, stiff and thick-set, stolid English officialism stamped upon every line of his heavy-featured, commonplace face. A little way off, in marked contrast to these two, Maurice Brady, tall, slight, and erect, his arms crossed upon his chest, his pale handsome

face and resolute disdainful air giving him rather the aspect of some political prisoner — an Emmet or a Wolfe Tone—at the bar of his country's enemies. Behind, and as a background to these, the wild helter-skelter crowd of idlers and lookers-on—women with blue cloaks, bare feet, ragged red petticoats; old hags, bewrinkled and hideous; half-naked boys, who skipped about, active as goats, amongst the rocks, and were with difficulty restrained by the police. Every now and then some fresh figures would appear over the edge of the basin, hurrying eagerly down to the scene below. After its long ages of idleness and vacancy, the amphitheatre had at last vindicated its existence. It was a theatre indeed to-day! a theatre brimming over with eager spectators. Ledge above ledge, rock over rock, the rows of wild, excited faces rose one above the other —the sun streaming in sleepy oblique bands over the whole, a few astonished sheep or goats showing their white, impassive faces here and there amongst the crowd.

After a little delay the examination began. Maurice Brady was the first witness.

Questioned by the coroner. "The deceased is your brother?"

"Yes."

"When did you see him last alive?"

"Four days since."

"He was then in his ordinary health?"

"Yes."

"Have you reason to think that your brother was upon bad terms with any one?"

"I have."

"With whom?"

"With Hurrish O'Brien."

At this answer, given in a clear distinct tone, a sudden murmur ran through the crowd,—a low buzz of anger, indignation, contempt. A thrill of excitement passed through Maurice Brady. It was the first note of popular displeasure he had ever heard! It nerved him for the moment, however, rather than daunted. "Fools! did they suppose he cared a ha'porth about *their* opinions?" he thought contemptuously.

The examination continued. Was it in consequence of his brother having taken the farm from which the Maloneys had been evicted that he and O'Brien had quarrelled?

To this, rather to the surprise of some of the hearers, the witness answered "No."

Questioned further whether he had ever received any warnings that his brother was in danger? Answered, "Yes." "Was the person he was in danger from Hurrish O'Brien?" Answered, "Yes." Questioned who had given him that information? Answered—nothing.

His examination was then suspended while the other witnesses were called. The first was one of the constabulary, who deposed to having been told by a boy who was passing the barracks that a body was lying in the valley below. That he and another constable thereupon came to the place, and found the body lying as it was at present. The boy, he said, had run off, and had not been seen since, but they would no doubt be able to lay hands on him if he was required. He also deposed to finding the gun,

which he produced, both barrels of which had been lately fired.

The next witness was the dispensary doctor, who had partially examined the body previous to the arrival of the coroner. The deceased had, in his opinion, he said, died from the effects of the blow visible upon the temple. There was no gunshot wound, or other wound or concussion of any kind, so far as he had ascertained, with the exception of a slight injury to the back of the head. The blow upon the temple must have been given by a very heavy weapon, probably a hammer or a loaded stick. Death in all probability had resulted directly from effusion of blood to the brain: he should be able, however, he said, to form a more decided opinion on this point after the regular *post-mortem* examination. His evidence ended by his stating that so violent and so instantaneously fatal a blow could only, in his opinion, have been inflicted by an unusually powerful man.

This was practically all the evidence. There was not much delay either about the verdict: accidental death was evidently impracticable, even to the ingenuity of an Irish jury. No man, by any stretch of activity, stupidity, or ingenuity, could have given that blow on the head to himself. There was only one other alternative, therefore. The twelve men unanimously brought in an open verdict—murder against some person or persons unknown.

As soon as this business was finished, and the embodied majesty of the law had broken itself up again into its individual insignificance, four of the constabulary advanced, lifted the body of the unfor-

tunate Brady from the ground, laid it upon a hurdle, kept at the barracks for such purposes, and, taking each a corner, bore it away uphill at a brisk walk.

The crowd fell back on all sides as it advanced through their midst. Some of the women crossed themselves, and the elder men removed their hats. The rest, including those who had just been serving on the jury, stood looking on with an air of sullen indifference. When, however, Maurice Brady followed, this indifference changed. Symptoms of anger broke out. No actual menaces were uttered, but all eyes, even those of the women, fixed themselves upon him with an expression of sudden repulsion. He was only half aware of this himself, however, as he avoided looking any one fully in the face, his chief desire being to get away from them all as quickly as possible, and to be alone.

It was a long hard climb for the four bearers, and they were obliged several times to put the hurdle down in order to rest. A couple of men who had followed at a little distance were called to once and offered money if they would assist in the carriage, but they peremptorily declined, and turned away immediately down a side-path. When the top of the ridge was at last reached, the narrow, hemmed-in world of rocks in which they had been all this while enclosed, changed suddenly to a wide-reaching world of sea, and land, and sky, green on the side of South Clare, grey where the terraced hills of Burren stretched for miles. Tubbamina lay immediately below them, a melancholy cluster of whitewashed cabins, surrounding a squat and sordid-looking chapel; beyond lay the beautiful widely open mouth of the bay of Gal-

way, with the long low line of coast reaching from that town to Greatman's Bay; and far, far away, over the shimmering waters of the bay, and over all the low-lying country between, the saw-edged outline of the Twelve Pins of Bennabeola rose, one behind the other, softened, made mystical, spiritualised, against a clear blue, milky-looking sky.

Land and water were so mingled, one might almost say interpenetrated, in the picture, that it was hard to say where the one began and the other ended. The stern, forbidding rocks beyond Blackhead were bathed in soft caressing sunlight, as the sea broke in green volumes along their base. At one point the water could be seen glittering far inland in a number of tiny lakes, linked together and melted into one by distance. At another, small rocks and islets—illauns, carricks, and carrickeens—bedotted the edges of the coast, where two or three brown-sailed hookers were slowly creeping along, every sail set to catch the capricious breeze. Due west the three isles of Aran streamed across the mouth of the bay,—the two great cyclopean forts of Dun Ængus, and its brother Dun Conchobhair, even at this distance the most conspicuous features in their low, flat, tabular outline.

The descent upon the other side to that lower col or ridge upon which the Bradys' cabin stood was another change again. They had to pass along a narrow lane, sunk deep in the rocks, through breaks in which small square fields, covered with stones, became visible. Here and there were a few scant patches of potatoes and oats, all neglected and deep in weeds. A quantity of sea-gulls were collected in screaming excitement at one spot. Crows stalked

to and fro over the grass with an air of protectorship, and some large red and white cows looked up with an air of mild-eyed interest and wonder as the gloomy little procession passed them by. To them, no doubt, as to others, it was quite a cheerful and pleasing break in the uninteresting monotony of their lives.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAURICE'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

At last they reached the cabin. It was unspeakably miserable,—several sizes larger than Hurrish's, but naked, bald, and dreary beyond words. Not a tree—not even the all-prevailing hawthorn; not a flower; not an attempt or a pretence of a garden; not a paling—nothing to relieve the stark and stony air of desolation. The walls had once been whitewashed, but the big stones had long ago reasserted themselves in all directions over the surface. What remained of the whitewash was all smeared and streaked with long green and yellow weather-stains, giving it an indescribably dank, bilious, and soddened aspect. A large cow-house flanked it on one side, and a pig-sty on the other; but these symptoms of prosperity were if anything rather more filthy, rickety, and tumble-down than the original building. To Maurice this ancestral abode of his had always been a source of unspeakable discomfort, the more so that his brother was a well-to-do man, with plenty of live-stock, and

even a considerable sum of money laid away in bank. To-day he hardly heeded it, however. The external aspect of things had ceased, for the time being, to produce any particular impression one way or other upon his mind.

They laid the unfortunate Mat upon his own bed, which was in the inner room. Then the policemen came out, and stood waiting. Maurice, with that ineffaceable instinct of hospitality which survives all vicissitudes, looked about for whisky, but could find none. There were three or four empty barrels lying about, and a whole mountain of empty bottles at one corner. The furniture was originally of a better quality seemingly than at Hurrish's house, but broken for the most part almost to splinters, as if habitually used as missiles. The fire, too, had gone out, and though the afternoon was warm, the black dismal fireplace struck a sense of chilling desolation. It seemed as if Death had seated itself in bodily presence upon the hearth.

Maurice looked round for some means of relighting it. There was no turf to be seen, however, so he went outside to the stack, which was close to the cow-house. At the door he encountered one of the two men who worked for his brother,—a big, ragged, hulking fellow, who stood staring about, his mouth half open, in idle vacancy. This man he ordered, in his usual tone of unquestionable authority, to go and fetch some turf, and make the fire up at once. The fellow waited until he had done speaking, then, suddenly turning upon him, cursed him with a hideous oath, and asked him whether he supposed that he was going to demean himself by doing anything for

a —— informer? turned on his heel, and so walked away.

Maurice Brady stood still as if a thunderbolt from heaven had fallen upon him. An informer! The word seemed to echo and vibrate with brazen tongues and trumpets all about the place! The constables, finding probably that no refreshments were forthcoming after their long climb, came out, and one of them told Maurice in passing that they would be on the road by turns all that night, in case of any disturbance.

He made no answer. He was incapable of speaking. "An informer!" That was all he heard, knew, thought of. He, Maurice Brady, an *informer!* When they had gone, he stumbled back into the house, and sat down upon the first stool he met with, his head ringing with the word, a whirling noise like the rumble of machinery sounding continually in his ears.

If any one of a higher calibre even had said it, he could have borne it better. But a fellow like Lanty Bradigan! a hind, a savage, a cutter of turf and drawer of water! a wretched ignorant creature, whom he had always swept into the very dust with his contempt! It stung him to the very pith and marrow of his bones, through his pride, through his self-respect, through everything. It seemed a foretaste, too, of other scornings and hissings which he was likely to encounter, as if fierce contemptuous fingers were being pointed at him in all directions. "An informer!" Word summing up everything that to an Irishman of his type is expressive of ignominy! Heavens and earth! *he*, Maurice Brady, to be branded as an informer!

How long he sat there he could not afterwards have told. Suddenly he came to himself with a start, and looked round. There was not a living creature there besides himself,—not a cat even, or a dog. In front the black hearth stared at him with its sickly air of conscious desolation. It had begun to grow dark, too, and the corners of the room were already deep in shadow. The door of the inner one was partially opened, and he could see a corner of the bed and a bit of the blanket. He averted his eyes from it in quick horror—a horror which seemed to rise like some sort of foul exhalation from the ground. All the scenes of that long day rushed back upon him suddenly. He felt glued to his seat by a creeping terror, which rose and rose, until it seemed to clutch at his throat with icy hands. All his life he had prided himself upon his exceptional freedom from superstition of all sorts, but the events of the day had been against him. He had the blood of endless generations of Connaught peasants in his veins, and he found himself battling in vain against the rising demon.

The whole house was like a grave! His blood congealed, and a cold thrill of terror seemed to shoot along his spine. Alone with a corpse! He remembered his mother lying dead there in that very room: he had been only a boy at the time, still he recalled it vividly. How white and thin she had looked, poor woman, worn out with much trouble and many tears. Suddenly a fresh terror seized him. What if she should come back to-night to look down at this step-son who had used her so brutally! His teeth chattered at the thought. A sense of other

presences—intangible, invisible, terrible—filled his brain with horror, and he rose with a violent effort from his stool, resolved to escape. Nothing should induce him, he determined, to remain there a minute longer.

As he approached the door a sudden loud rap came to the other side of it. He started violently, and hesitated, then went forward after a moment and opened it.

It was no very formidable invasion! Only a couple of poor old crones, who had come up from the village, according to custom, to do the last offices for the dead man, and to offer, if his brother wished it, to spend the night in the house. The two old creatures' hideous, mumbling, bewrinkled faces were as beautiful to Maurice at that moment as if they had been a pair of white-winged seraphs. Telling them to do whatever they chose, and to get whatever they wanted, he hastily gave them a handful of silver, took an ulster belonging to him over his arm, and, leaving the house, ran down the road with an elastic sense of escape.

It was not until he had got outside that he remembered that he had literally nowhere else to go. To return to Miltown-Malbay at that hour of the evening was impossible. There was not a house in the neighbourhood which would have consented to take him in, and had there been even, his pride would have forbidden his stooping to ask for a shelter which might have been refused. Happily the night was fine; he could sleep anywhere,—in a cave, under a bush, in a hollow—no matter where. Suddenly he remembered a place where he had often

lain out as a boy. He would go there, he resolved, and, so resolving, climbed over the nearest wall, and betook himself along a sort of cornice or ledge which extended for some distance above the line of small fields in the direction of the sea.

After about half an hour's walking he came to the place, a small pocket or hollow in the side of the ridge. It had once probably been a little lake or "corrie," but was now empty, the subterranean stream which formerly fed it having got diverted elsewhere. It was quite dry, and on the upper side a low but dense fringe of dwarf hawthorn bushes sheltered it effectually against the wind, so that even in very cold weather a man might lie here and be, comparatively speaking, warm. Maurice spread out his ulster upon the bottom of the hollow, threw himself upon it, pulling a piece over his legs, and lay down, pillowing his head on his hands.

The small patches of cultivated ground were by this time all behind, and only the rock-covered side of the landscape visible from where he lay. Far as he could see the grey stony waves of the Burren extended. He could see the thin jagged line of rocks which marked the opening to the Gortnacoppin valley, but the eye passed over it almost without a break. A few clouds had gathered, and all round the western horizon a heavy flouncing of solemn-looking purple rose above the sea. Higher up the sky was clear and almost colourless, everything seeming to be united in one clear uniform wash of grey. It was extraordinarily desolate. In the direction in which he was looking, not a house, not a moving speck, not a living thing of any sort or kind, was to be seen.

You might have imagined that no foot had ever trodden the earth, no sod ever been turned, no sower ever gone forth with his hands full of the grain of the coming years. Trackless, untamable, solitary, the wide hungry-looking country sloped away to the grey, solitary, all-devouring sea.

Under ordinary circumstances Maurice Brady would hardly have noticed whether it was desolate or not. He was not particularly sensitive to external impressions, having too much to think of generally to care what sort of a landscape he was looking at. Neither did he in the least mind being alone—as a rule preferred it—so few of the people he knew were worth being with. To-day, however, it began after a while to make an impression upon him. He wished that he could see something moving, if it were only a sheep or a cow. The cold vacant face of solitude impressed him here as the sense of unknown and unseen companionship had impressed him in the house, only in a different way. He felt chilled, nervous, forlorn, as if he had just been driven away from all human companionship—an outcast and an alien from all his kind.

The experience is probably not exceptional. Loneliness is only one word, but it covers a perfect multiplicity of sensations. Days, weeks, months of a man's own society may slide by without his often being even aware of them—without the faintest sense of loneliness coming near him. At another time a few hours is sufficient to create a feeling of alienation which seems to brand the very soul, and to carry it to the uttermost brink of despair, madness—death.

He tried to shake it off by dwelling upon other

things—upon the future. But what future had he now? he asked himself bitterly. A single day, a few hours, had sufficed to bring about the ruin of all his prospects, all his hopes. He remembered how he used to lie here as a boy looking out at this same naked world of crags, pining like a young hawk in a cage for the time when he would be a man, when he would take his place in the world; planning how he would distinguish himself,—he was not very sure how, it is true, but certainly be universally praised and admired. It was almost inevitable that this train of thought should bring with it the thought of Hurrish O'Brien—Hurrish who, of all his surroundings, had alone encouraged him in these visions. He could see his face—the good-natured mouth half open with admiration and wonder; the eyes—— No, he would not see it,—he resolved he would *not*. He sprang up hastily, and, leaving his ulster behind him, mounted a few hundred steps above the corrie, and sat down again upon the ridge, turning his face in the opposite direction.

Here the most prominent object was the Donore woods and lake which lay immediately below. The dusk was fast blurring all minor details, but he could see the outline of the lake, and the grey mass of the house with some white steps in front. A few lights shone in the upper part of the house, but the bottom was all dark and blank. He sat here a long while with his elbows upon his knees, not thinking definitely, but glooming dismally over everything. He hardly thought of Mat now. The nearer and more personal trouble was wearing away the other, as a stronger acid eats out a weaker one. His own

balked ambition, his own blighted prospects, gnawed at his heart, and seemed to rise up before him like a bodily presence, and to reproach him with their changed aspects. He shivered with discomfort and bitter angry self-dissatisfaction. Then a wind arose and made it chilly upon the ridge, so that he shivered again with cold, and after a while returned to the corrie, wrapped himself in his ulster, shut his eyes resolutely, and soon afterwards fell asleep.

He dreamed wild confused dreams—dreams of struggling and fighting, guns firing, men falling over cliffs, Mat and Hurrish fighting and struggling together, but always, somehow, Mat attacking Hurrish and trying to kill him, never the other way. Then he dreamed that he was in a boat alone, he did not know where, but the motion was very strange,—not like that of a boat, more as if he were being carried along over rough ground. All at once he was struggling in the water, only it was not water at all, but sand, like the sands at Miltown-Malbay,—great yellow waves of sand blown by the wind, passing one over the other, and engulfing him horribly in their depths. Again and again he tried to escape, but the more he tried the more they swept down upon him, and rolled him over and over, and filled his mouth, and his ears, and his nostrils, and he sank down deeper and deeper, and there was a noise as of mill-wheels, and it was all dark and horrible, and like a grave. Then he dreamt that he saw a coracle coming with a bright white light fastened in the middle of it, and in the coracle sat his mother and Hurrish and Alley. And Alley screamed when she saw him, and hid her face; and his mother screamed too, and told him to be

gone. But Hurrish jumped into the sand and tried to pull him out, but the sand held him fast, and he could not get loose; it was like pitch,—as fast as he got free in one place he was seized in another. And all at once he perceived that it was not sand at all, but people,—men and women, hundreds and thousands of them,—all clamouring, and roaring, and making hideous faces at him. And they all shrieked with one accord that he was "an informer! an informer!" and that he must be torn in pieces. And Hurrish tried to pull him away, but failed. And some of the people had dog's faces, and others had helmets like the policemen; but most of them seemed dead, and had their eyes shut, and white bands under their chins. Then suddenly Alley took up the light and held it close to the crowd, so that he could see them all distinctly. And the light seemed to make the people melt as if they had been made of wax, and they fell back little by little, and lay in heaps, one on top of another, until at last he saw that they were not people at all, but seaweed. Then Hurrish took him up in his arms and put him into the boat, and they rowed away together up the Gortnacoppin valley until they came to the cabin where old Bridget was standing stirring the pot, and when she saw him she shrieked, and took up the boiling pot in her hand and ran at him, and tried to fling it over him; and he struggled, and they both fell together upon the floor, and the boiling water rolled everywhere and spread about like a new sea. And with that he awoke and found himself upon his back in the corrie, a newly-risen moon shining full upon his face, and all the stony country around swimming in a silver

mist, which almost hid the Atlantic. And he shivered and gathered the ulster closely about him, for the air was very chill, and soon afterwards fell asleep again, and this time dreamed pleasanter things—of his boyhood, of Hurrish's admiration, of the great things he himself was to do when he grew up to be a man. But when he awoke the second time, and found that it was daylight, one of the first things he did was to wonder whether Mr Cavanagh, the resident magistrate, had yet returned from Limerick.

CHAPTER XV.

ALLEY'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Alley Sheehan came to herself very gradually after Maurice had left her. For some time she lay upon the same spot, hardly knowing what had happened, or why she was there at all. The act of fainting was so unfamiliar, that it seemed like a sort of death —as if she had passed out of the world, and then come back to it again. Little by little as she recovered, all the dreadful weight of gloom came floating slowly back across her poor little soul, as black thunder-clouds float back across some tiny pool or brook. She was too utterly worn out, however, to try and think it all out now—she who in the course of her short simple life had never hardly had to think before. After a while, therefore, she gathered herself up from the ground and began wearily retracing her

steps, turning instinctively towards what she called her home, and crawling over the rocks with the languid, trailing step of one suddenly overtaken with old age.

She was met at the door by Bridget, who hailed upon her a furious volley of abuse and execrations, which would probably have proceeded to yet more violent extremities but that the old woman was too excited by the day's events to be able to turn her thoughts for more than a minute in any other direction. She moved about the cabin with an air of savage exultation, waving her hands and crashing them down with triumph upon every object they encountered. "At last!" her expression seemed to say. "At last, ye gods—at last!" So visibly exultant was she, that it was probably just as well for Hurrish that the police did not come at once to the cabin in search of him, or even those professional dullards might have succeeded for once in extracting something from her in her present excitement.

Alley kept out of the way as well as the narrow dimensions of the cabin would admit of, too weary and sick at heart even to feel any alarm. Happily, when night came, Bridget roughly ordered her to undress at once and go to bed. The old woman was in a state of constantly increasing and now almost convulsive excitement. The boys had come in, and had repeated what had happened at the inquest, of which they had formed part of the irregular audience. Hurrish had not yet returned from Ballyvaughan,—indeed his mother did not know whether he intended to do so, or to try and escape at once. She was proud, and pleased, and excited, and horribly frightened all

at once; above all, she was suspicious, and Alley Sheehan was the chief object of her suspicions. She had always regarded the girl as an interloper—an eater of other people's bread,—an intruder where she was not wanted and had no business to be; and now in addition she began to suspect her of being a spy, a traitor. The scene beside the dead man's body that morning had suggested to her violent and utterly unreasoning old wits that Alley would be capable of betraying Hurrish—selling him to the "polis"! With this idea in her mind she never allowed the poor child out of her sight, following her about all the afternoon with angry bloodshot glances, as she moved to and fro about her various household duties, trying as usual to bring a little order into the crowded and chronic disorders of the scene. Fortunately for herself, Alley knew nothing of these suspicions. And when she had given the boys their supper, washed out the black pot and left it with a supply of water ready to Bridget's hand, she crawled thankfully into the heap of rags and straw, covered with a blanket, which she and little Katty shared in the inner room; and there, gathering the child up closely first into her arms for comfort and sustainment, worn out with the events of the day, she sobbed herself to sleep.

When she awoke it was still deep night, but a moon had risen, and was sending a thin, straggling, zigzag ray of light through the window set in the stone wall immediately above her bed. It was not often that the moonlight was able to come in there, for the window was so small that it was only at one particular angle that it could hit off the tiny square, barely six inches either way—a square, alas! care-

fully puttied in on all sides, and utterly useless therefore for the much-needed purpose of ventilation.

Alley lay for a while looking at the silver ray, as it partially lit up the narrow, dusty interior—the bed where the two boys slept, the corner where a number of chickens were reposing upon a bar of wood stuck into the wall for their convenience, the fly-blown prints which constituted the only approach to adornment. Then moving carefully so as not to awaken little Katty, who lay curled in a pink ball with her two fat thumbs in her mouth, she got upon her knees and lifted herself up until she could peep through the window—putting her face necessarily close to the solid, greenish glass for that purpose.

After the narrow obscurity of the dim interior, there was something startling in the luminousness of that stony world which met her view without. Under the wide wash of moonlight every stone showed visibly, each dashed in in white, as if a slight shower of snow had lately fallen. The deep rifts which crossed the platforms in every direction looked black and sharp, as if ruled in ink upon that snowy surface. Some big nightbird—probably an owl—flew by with a sudden whirring of its wings. The wide arch of sky was bare of cloud right down to the very horizon, a few stars pulsating faintly far in the dreamy West. Alley shivered, and felt frightened at that immensity. It seemed to confront her sternly and threateningly, as if to demand her secret, and she turned hurriedly back to the small room and its overflowing occupants, with a sense of relief and human companionship.

The door into the outer room was open, and the

moon had by this time found its way in there too. Her eye mechanically followed the white guiding finger, as it traversed the thick darkness, heavy with human breath, and the lingering smoke from the big chimney. It lit upon the top of a bed—the only one in the establishment deserving of the name—brought there, as she knew well, by her aunt, Mary Sheehan, upon her marriage. A black curly head lay upon the pillow of this bed, and the white guiding finger, which had just travelled to the spot, rested full upon the features of Hurrish, as he lay with one arm outside the blanket, which heaved slowly up and down, under the rhythmic rise and fall of his broad chest.

Alley had been used to seeing Hurrish there ever since, as a child of nine years old, she had first come to the cabin. As to there being any impropriety or indecorum in such close neighbourhood, such an idea had never even distantly crossed her imagination. She was pure as only a girl brought up in such a state of utterly savage innocence could be pure—pure, that is, to the point of barely realising the existence of impurity. Now, however, she started up, and gazed at him with widely-distended eyes, as if she had seen him there for the first time. It brought back all the terrors of the day before with such horrible, such appalling vividness. She seemed to live over again the moment when she had first discovered the dead man, and that still worse moment when old Bridget had flourished the blackthorn stick in her face, and had told her, with fiendish glee, that Hurrish was the murderer! Was it true? Was he, *could* he be, that dreadful thing? Would he be

sleeping there so peacefully--as peacefully as his own little Katty curled up in the bed beside her—if he had really killed Mat Brady? A murderer she felt sure would look very differently,—more like the ugly yellow Judas in the picture which hung over the dresser—angry, scowling, dark,—not good and kind like Hurrish, whose face looked pleasant and friendly even in his sleep.

Like every girl of her class and country, Alley was perfectly well used to hearing murder talked of, and talked of, too, without any special reprobation. She had heard such talk going on around her all her life, though the deeds described were naturally rarely called by so offensive a name. In all these cases, however, there had been a certain vagueness about the actual perpetrator. It was "justice," the "society," the "brotherhood"; and the "society" has in Ireland long since come to occupy in popular imagination the place of a despised and derided executive. Even so Alley had often shuddered at the ideas which the talk had called up. Sensitive natures, however accustomed to horrible images, rarely accept them in their entirety. They start aside and cry, "Not that! not that!" They invent some other and less terrible explanation to account for what they hear. Even a Roman girl, accustomed from babyhood to hearing of the delights of the amphitheatre, must now and then have turned sick with horror, one would think, when first some time-honoured piece of barbarity was enacted before her eyes,—must have implored, with streaming eyes, that this or that particular victim might be allowed to escape. Alley, poor little trembling soul, was no Roman maiden, and the harsh

realities of her lot pressed with cruel severity upon her gentle timorous spirit. She remained there for some time kneeling upon the bed, suffering as only such a spirit can suffer when brought for the first time face to face with those hideous and, alas! not imaginary phantoms—Death, Suffering, Crime. At last, with a sort of despair, she got up, crossed the room, took down her rosary from the nail where it hung, got back into bed again, crossed herself, and began to pray.

She prayed for Hurrish, for Maurice, for herself—that she might be good, that she might not be so frightened, that she might be delivered from evil. As the beads slipped one by one through her fingers, her lips mechanically repeated the prayers given to be recited with them. Her thoughts, however, outflew the words. There was a native tide of adoration, a flow of innocent love in her spiritual nature which seemed to supply the place of that intellect which she certainly did not possess, and which gave her strength in the midst of her fears. Kneeling there upon her miserable bed, her face uplifted, her wide innocent eyes fixed upon the small square of light overhead, she might have suggested the image of some pure and sainted soul, come from its serene abode to visit some dark and loathsome tomb. Her slight girlish figure, denuded of the uncouth clothes which she wore in the daytime, and half bathed in the stream of white light, looked vaporous and unreal. She was hardly herself conscious of her body, hardly conscious of her fatigue—even the terrors of the day before seemed to melt away in the glow of her thoughts. It was as if she were caught up by some

power external to herself—caught as in a mother's arms. That was her own feeling. Often when she prayed it did actually seem to her as if a mother's arms were around her. Was there not, in fact, a mother always near — a kind, tender, pitying mother? a mother whom no amount of weakness or faultiness could weary or alienate?

At last she began to pray for Mat Brady. The very thought of his name frightened her at first. She seemed to see the scene again as she had seen it that morning—the stony glen, the singing larks, the dead man hideously twisted upon the ground, his blank eyes fixed upon the sky, his hands lying loose amongst the grass and flowers. The shock and terror returned, and a horror filled the air. As she went on, however, she gathered strength, and these terrors little by little passed away. There was a particular prayer to be used for the dead which she tried to remember. She could not do so, however, so had to fall back upon her own artless words instead. Her innocent spirit followed the dull, brutish, crime-encumbered one, as it fled into the darkness and the mystery. As she prayed, this darkness seemed gradually to melt, and a vague sense of light, of pity, and of opening doors, to take its place. Then the light itself grew vaguer. There was a sensation of hovering and floating, and sounds like birds chirping, and the buzzing of bees. Then these all melted together into a great silence and poor little Alley was once more asleep.

When she awoke again it was broad daylight. The boys were up and running about, half-dressed, and lively as crickets, and old Bridget's harsh screaming voice was heard calling to her from the other

room to get up at once for a lazy hussy, and bring the child in.

She got up, feeling as if she had been beaten, and could hardly summon energy to collect and put on her own and little Katty's clothes. Washing was a ceremony for which—well-to-do, comparatively speaking, as the O'Briens were—there was, alas! remarkably slight provision.

When she got into the outer room Hurrish was sitting by the fire, lighting his pipe with a sod of "live" turf held between his finger and thumb; Lep—his lustrous brown eyes fixed upon his master—sitting erect beside him. She noticed that Hurrish did not turn round as he generally did and greet them with a laugh and a joking word; and although little Katty ran up to him at once, and caught him round the leg with her fat pinching fingers, he allowed her to do so without lifting her to his knee, or making any response to her baby prattle. Bridget, too, had lost her air of exultation, and stalked about the kitchen sullenly, only opening her lips to give utterance to some word of reprobation, usually addressed to Alley herself. The boys were the only people, in fact, who behaved as usual, and watched the pot and the manipulations of their grandmother's iron spoon with their customary air of eager, puppy-like expectation.

Twice while she was helping Bridget to prepare the stirabout a man came to the door, said a word to Hurrish, and then ran away again. He sat stolidly on by the fire, however, his pipe in his mouth, his eyes fixed upon the smouldering sods of turf. Suddenly a sound of panting was heard outside—"pant, pant, pant"—like a dog hard pressed that nears his

shelter. The door was flung open, and poor Thady-na-Taggart the "natural" rushed in. He stood stock-still for a moment on the threshold; his lank hair, blown wildly about by the wind, hung loosely over his white vacant face; his lack-lustre eyes—dazzled from the daylight—roamed round evidently in search of some one. At last he distinguished Hurrish, and rushing up to him, clutched him by the arms, urging him vehemently, though silently, to get up and come away with him. Lep barked and sprang angrily at the new-comer, then, as if ashamed, wagged his tail, and licked Thady's hand. Thady, however, took no notice; all his thoughts evidently were concentrated upon Hurrish. He first tried to pull him off his stool; that failing, put his arms bodily round him, as if to induce him to stand up. Then—Hurrish still declining to yield, and his weight being too great for him to pull him up by main force—he began frantically pulling off his own clothes, and hastily thrusting the first he got loose over Hurrish's head, evidently with the intention of dressing him up in them.

What wild idea of exchange of identity passed through the poor creature's bewildered brain Heaven alone knows! But that it was touching in its devotion, the idea was laughable to the last degree. Hurrish was considerably over six feet high, and broad in proportion; the idiot almost a dwarf, his ragged clothes, rain-shrunk and sun-discoloured, would barely have covered a third of the other man's body. At first Hurrish simply stared, failing to realise the meaning of the manœuvre. When he did so, a smile of sudden pity came into his face, and he caught hold

of poor Thady's hands to hinder the process being carried further, which in another minute would have left him standing stark naked upon the floor.

"Thire, thire, Thady! Sure I ondershtand what ye're manin' *now*," he said, soothingly. "Don't be shtripping of yersel' no more, for sure the clothes wudn't cover th' half ov me. Be aisy, Thady dear; you'll see me safe again, sure an' sartin, whativer happens!"

Apparently the words failed to make any entrance into the idiot's mind, for he remained, his clothes half off, staring blankly, with an expression of piteous disappointment. The boys, who at first had remained apart, now drew near, and stood gaping at him, as at some strange wild animal they saw for the first time. Suddenly Thady opened his mouth to the widest possible extent, and burst into loud lamentations, the first sounds he had uttered since his entrance. Hurrish endeavoured to soothe him. Alley, too, drew near, with an impulse of pity. But the idiot would have none of their consolation. Gathering the remainder of his rags, and leaving the one that he had tried to force upon Hurrish still lying upon the floor, he ran towards the door, the tears streaming down his poor face and making long light channels upon his cheeks, flew out of the cabin, his bare feet sounding for a minute—patter, patter, patter—upon the flags, and then ceasing suddenly.

There was a general pause — the boys staring blankly at one another and at their father, as if to ask the meaning of what had happened. Finding, however, that he took no notice, and quietly continued smoking, the paramount interest of breakfast

soon resumed its dominion over their minds. The stirabout was boiling, and all the party were sitting silently waiting for it to be ready, when there came a new, and this time a more formidable interruption. A sudden startling rat-tat-tat sounded on the half-opened door. Instinctively Alley, who was nearest, ran to see who was there, but fell back the next minute with a loud cry of dismay. It seemed to her as if the whole world had suddenly become filled with policemen! Two were in the actual doorway, and three more a little way off in the bohereen below!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ROAD TO JAIL.

Mr Cavanagh, the "resident" magistrate (so called because the only one of the magistrates *not* a permanent resident), had returned from Limerick the previous evening, and had been at once interviewed by Mr Higgins. Upon the evidence laid before him, he, to that gentleman's keen satisfaction, not only issued a warrant for Hurrish's arrest, but expressed himself in high terms of reprobation as to Mr O'Brien's unaccountable conduct in having hesitated to do so. Within as short a time, therefore, as was possible after his arrest, our hero found himself upon a car, with one well-armed policeman beside him, and two more upon the other side, bound for the assize town of Ennis, there to be lodged in jail

to take his trial for murder—bail in a case of such gravity being, as a matter of course, refused.

He was not particularly alarmed for his own safety, and was able, therefore, to take the proceedings with a considerable amount of equanimity. He had had plenty of time to escape had he wished to do so, but had deliberately made up his mind against that course. Had he done so, beggary, pure and simple, would have stared his mother, the children, and Alley in the face. He had little or no money laid by, and as none of those left could have taken on the farm, of which he had only a yearly tenancy, within a very short time they would have had nothing to look to but the workhouse.

Over and above this, the mere fact of leaving Ireland—for life, as, under the circumstances, it must have been—would have been little less objectionable to him than death itself. He had never felt the faintest beckoning towards that delectable Land of Promise which lay upon the other side of the Atlantic. Had he not in his youth had the farm to look forward to, and had been forced to emigrate, his one thought day and night would have been to put together a sufficient sum of money and return to Ireland by the next ship. The only other alternative—that of remaining in the country *without* giving himself up—though a safe proceeding enough, is a remarkably uncomfortable one. Hurrish had seen others who had tried it, and knew its miseries. A week of such shuffling, skulking, shivering, night-wandering existence, would have driven him, he knew, into giving himself up to the police as a preferable alternative.

Going to jail—though a distinction, of course, in itself—was not, it is true, the precise form of distinction which he would have chosen; but then how few *are* entirely free to choose their own laurels? As to the danger of his incurring the further distinction of being hung, that was an idea to which he hardly gave a thought. He knew the situation well enough to feel pretty sure that the danger incurred in that direction was of the slightest. As for what an Englishman would probably have considered the safest thing to do — pleading manslaughter or unavoidable homicide, and disclosing the whole circumstances as they really occurred — that, save under seal of confession to his priest, was an idea which would never for an instant have visited his imagination. In his eyes—probably in those of his legal adviser also—it would have seemed an act of simple and reprehensible self-destruction.

The road from Tubbamina to Ennis is about as desolate a one as is to be found in the whole west of Ireland, which, it must be owned, is saying a good deal. Once the rocky hills of the Burren were left behind, the car entered upon a wide, grey-green, undulating tract, treeless, featureless, almost houseless, one low green or brown hill rising after another in endless succession as far as the eye could see. What cultivation there existed was of the most rudimentary type conceivable. Small weedy-looking fields, divided from the road and from one another by dry walls of the lace-work variety, in some places by green dykes, with a fringe of willow or osmunda. Flakes of snow-white bog-cotton waved over dreary patches of swamp, and the dark heads of the reed-mace crowded hollows

from which turf had been cut and carted away. The houses, few and far between, were for the most part sunk below the level of the road. At one place three or four women were grubbing languidly at a sickly-looking plot of potatoes; at another two men were thatching, who turned and watched the car sullenly till it was out of sight. Then a mile or more without a creature save a stray cow on the roadside, or a sleepily-moving ass-cart. Suddenly they rattled round a sharp corner, and found themselves in the middle of a closely crowded cluster of houses, where the people all ran eagerly to the doors to see them go by, and the women spat, shrieked, and shook their fists passionately at the policemen. Another smaller but more prosperous-looking hamlet was passed, where a smart, newly-built chapel flaunted its cut-stone masonry and twirling weathercock, and a sinister old castle looked blackly down from a windy green hill hard by. Just after leaving this village, in the middle of a particularly lonely bit of road, a wild-looking young fellow—a total stranger to Hurrish—sprang actively over a wall as they were passing, bounded up to the car, though they were going at a smart pace at the time, and asked him in rapid Irish whether he wanted a rescue. The three constables simultaneously pointed their guns at him, and told him to remain there at his peril. The young fellow, however, took no notice, but ran lightly on, his brimless felt hat falling back from his black curly head, his sunburnt face and wild hawk eyes fixed exclusively upon the prisoner: evidently he was good for another ten miles if need were. Hurrish, however, shook his head. It was not a rescue he wanted,

but an acquittal, he explained. His unknown friend thereupon slackened speed suddenly, made a clutch at his hand to shake it, missed it, and disappeared immediately over another wall. From his appearance to his vanishing again there were scarcely three minutes.

When they got near to the outskirts of Ennis the car stopped at a police-station, and a short conference took place between the constables in charge and those within. Only one constable remained upon the car, and he appeared to be taking no particular heed of the prisoner. Hurrish, however, waited quietly. He had no idea of escaping. What would have been the use? It would only have been to begin the whole troublesome business over again. Better remain and see it out as it was.

A delicious brown trout-stream was sweeping under a bridge a little ahead of this point. A heron rose from its bank a few hundred yards lower down, spread its great sail-like wings, and flew away towards the west, its brown legs stretched stiffly out behind it. Hurrish followed it wistfully with his eyes as it grew gradually smaller and smaller, until it was lost to sight in the distance. A sudden yearning, a sudden wild, fierce desire for liberty, swept across him like thirst in a desert. He had hardly realised before that he was a prisoner, but now it seemed as if all at once he knew it. *He* could not turn back as the heron had done; *he* could not get home to his own house and his own people; he was a caged animal; a beast with a rope round its leg,—driven against his will as a sheep or a cow is driven to the market. To any one, but especially to so wild

a son of the soil, the first realisation of this fact has something in it that maddens. He looked suddenly round, first at the sleepy, vacant country, then up and down the road, and for a moment a thought of escape crossed his mind. Only for a moment. The hopelessness of the attempt rushed back upon him forcibly. He caught the eye of the constable, too, looking inquisitively at him across the well of the car. An impulse of self-respect made him relax the eagerness of the gaze, turn his head the other way, and resume his former air and attitude of indifference.

A minute after the other two constables returned, and directing the carman to take a detour which avoided the main street, got again upon the car and drove rapidly to the jail. Their way lay along a dirty but tolerably prosperous-looking street, where a number of peasant women were bargaining for the gorgeous crimson and magenta shawls and petticoats hung up in tempting array along the outsides of the shops. It was market-day, and they were too eager to finish their purchases, and get back to their donkey-carts, to take much notice of the prisoner or his escort. Hurrish gazed at it all with the aching interest a man feels in the last things he beholds before the doors of a prison close behind him. Ennis, with its crowded market-place,—the centre of all the other smaller villages round about—its gorgeous new cathedral; its statue of the Liberator; its political pretension; its air of bustle and importance,—was London, Paris, Vienna, all in one to him, and this glimpse of fashion and brilliancy was not, even under the circumstances, without a pleasurable excitement.

He had not much time to enjoy it, however. The

shops ceased; a line of stone walls, cold, high, and vacant-looking, took their place: they had arrived at the door of the jail. The three constables jumped down and took him by the arms. The door opened, and he was marched inside. Some one in authority advanced. Then, after a few minutes' delay, he was marched down a narrow passage, with iron-clamped doors on either side; one of these doors was unlocked, disclosing a narrow cell about the size of a bathing-box. Into this he was walked, and the next minute —almost before he had fairly realised what had happened—the door shut behind him with an emphatic bang.

He stood still a moment, half stunned, then stumbled over to the bed and sat down. It seemed as if the concussion of the door had shaken his ideas clean out of their usual courses. He felt numbed and stupefied, as if he had suddenly changed his identity with some one else, and had not got accustomed to the new one.

He was roused by a peculiar sensation of discomfort. The window of the cell was set in the outer wall of the prison, and a full blaze of daylight was pouring through it at that moment. It lit up every atom of the narrow space, glaring with immaculate whitewash, which reflected itself in twofold brilliancy at all the corners, and threw a responsive gleam upon the magnificently scoured boards. Hurrish felt dazed and giddy as a fish would have been, suddenly exposed to so brilliant an illumination. An unreasoning hatred for this glaring self-righteous place, into which he had been pushed, rose to his mind, and it was with some difficulty that he resisted rushing

against the door and wounding himself in a vain effort to break through. Next to the whitewash, the worst offence—alas! poor Hurrish—was the ultra self-glorifying cleanliness! The ghastly cleanliness and whiteness together nearly made him sick. Out of doors he was used, of course, to light, but then no one out of doors is surrounded by a girdle of dazzling whiteness, a few feet from the end of his nose. How he yearned after his own brown weather-beaten cabin, with its smoke-obscured corners and multitudinous litter! Was there nothing else he could look at, he asked himself—*nothing?* If he had to stay staring at those sickening white walls for the next three weeks, he should go mad, and that would be very nearly as bad as being hung!

Suddenly the window itself caught his eye. It was high up in the wall, but by mounting upon a chair and pulling himself upwards, he was able, by sheer muscular effort, to get his nose and eyes over the ledge, and this he proceeded to do. It was strongly secured, but to his relief he found that it looked, not into the courtyard, but into the outer world. By stretching upwards he could even see a bit of the street below, and people passing and repassing. A black-faced beggar, with grimy professional clothes hanging on by a few alarmingly fragile ribbons, was leaning against the opposite wall, stretching out from time to time a mechanical hand for alms. An old woman, with a basket of apples before her, was squatting upon the ground, and at her feet a small fair-haired child, presumably her grandchild, was amusing itself by picking up fragments of apple-peel, and throwing them into the

gutter. A feeling of unaccountable affection for these strange people filled Hurrish's mind, and the tears sprang into his eyes. The little girl was a pretty little creature, dressed in a single ragged garment, which left her small limbs and neck completely bare; against the grimy obscurity of the wall beyond, they looked wonderfully fresh and white. Suddenly a car came round the corner, imperiling the feet of the group. Hurrish, with an impulse of alarm, instinctively stretched out his hands as if to protect the child. A young man was seated on the car,—a slight active figure in a well-fitting suit of grey tweed. He was not really at all like Maurice Brady, still there was sufficient suggestion of resemblance to give Hurrish first a feeling of pleasure, to be immediately followed by a sudden bitter start of pain. Maurice Brady! That was the worst of all,—the only part of the misfortune that had overtaken him which *was* unendurable. He let himself drop from the window, and sat down again upon his pallet, his arms and legs falling despondently together,—a mere nerveless heap of dejected frieze!

When he had been first told that Maurice had denounced him, the intelligence had roused him to a fit of violent indignation—not against Maurice but his informant. He absolutely refused to give any credit whatever to the assertion. When, little by little, the truth of it, however, began to sink into his mind, it had produced a sort of torpor. He could not conceive it,—could not realise it, or get hold of the idea at all. All the time he was standing before the magistrate, all the time he was on the car, his thoughts kept recurring to it, and each time with the

same dull sense of unreality. It was not merely painful or disagreeable, but it was inconceivable—a thing past imagination or finding out. If Maurice had attacked him, shot him, assaulted him in any way—*that* he could have understood, for a brother, after all, is a brother; but to denounce him to the police, to the Government!—"th' *Inglish* Govern-mint!"—he kept repeating over and over to himself, as if it was in the very least likely that Maurice would have denounced him to the Spanish or the Dutch one!

Three or four hours after he had been in jail a warder brought him a large piece of bread, and some broth swimming with grease. He was very hungry, and ate with a good appetite. He tried to get into conversation with the man, but he turned away and shut the door without answering. Hurrish spun out the eating of his bread as long as he could, but all too soon it came to an end, and again vacuum stared him in the face. It seemed as if he had been already weeks in jail—as if all his previous life had been a dream, and this the reality. The punishment of imprisonment no doubt varies enormously, and to so wild a son of freedom—one to whom wind, rain, storm, all varieties of weather were welcome, but who had never yet spent an entire day in the house in his life—the misery must indeed have pretty nearly attained its maximum.

After a while he clambered up to the window again and resumed his gaze. It was his only link with the outer world, and as such he clung to it. Night came on, but still he remained. The figures below had by that time become mere phantoms,—

still they were human phantoms, and moving ones. By the light of the one lamp at the corner, he saw a sooty object in coat and hat pass an equally sooty one in petticoats and a shawl; then both looked back, mutual recognitions ensued, and they stood a while conversing amicably. A beggar was meanwhile bawling out a song, walking leisurely up and down the middle of the street, with his mouth wide open. Hurrish caught a stray word now and then—"The mas-a-cree-in va-ga-bonds" . . . "me dar-lint Paa-a-ady Wh-a-ck." Suddenly a turnkey entered behind and roughly desired him to get down and go to bed. The lights were going to be put out. He got down, and, pulling off some of his clothes, threw himself upon the pallet. It was as hard as a brick floor, but that made very little difference, and within half an hour he was sound asleep,—and so his first day's experience of Ennis jail came to an end.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR THOMOND O'BRIEN UPON THE REQUIREMENTS OF IRELAND.

Amongst the many touches of unconscious humour with which all life and history abounds, few perhaps are odder than the minuteness—the inconceivable minuteness—of the points upon which a man's good or bad reputation turns with his contemporaries. Ever since he had been settled at Donore, Major

Pierce O'Brien had done, or had at any rate tried to do, everything he could think of for the welfare and advantage of its people, and had been rewarded with suspicion, hatred, and ill-will, ending with repeated threats of death. All of a sudden, by the merest piece of chance, for declining to do what he ought no doubt in strictness to have done, and thereby setting himself in momentary opposition to the established powers, he suddenly, and at a bound, sprang from the blackest depths of unpopularity to the very summit of popular admiration!

Within a dozen hours of the "outrage," and simultaneously with the news of it, all over Ireland had flown the news of his refusal to sign the warrant for Hurrish's arrest,—news which was received, commented upon, praised, or condemned according to the politics of the hearer. In the course of an excited and somewhat incoherent article, that advanced organ 'The Wolfhound' had rejoiced next morning to learn that the once glorious and patriotic name of O'Brien was again to be seen upon the blood-stained banner of the people, and had commended him, in involved but evidently complimentary terms, upon the courage with which he had set the Government and its brutal hirelings at defiance. The consequence of all this, joined to the popular feeling in favour of Hurrish, had suddenly—as if with the finger of a magician—lifted the ban that had so long hung over Donore, and flung it for the time being to the winds. In every cabin upon the property, and at every wake, fair, and local meeting of any sort, this performance of the "mhaster's" was the theme of universal commendation, which amongst his own particular re-

tainers rose for the moment to a pitch of absolute enthusiasm.

To no human being did this sudden and most undeserved rush of popularity come with more complete astonishment than to the recipient of it. In refusing to sign the warrant for Hurrish's arrest, Mr O'Brien had been actuated by no sympathy, assuredly, with the blood-stained banner of the people, but simply by a prosaic disbelief in his guilt, combined, it must be owned, with a small and very private grudge against that self-satisfied official Mr Sub-inspector Higgins. He was no more of a Nationalist, or a Liberal even, than he had ever been. As for opposing the Government, and throwing himself upon the popular side, such an idea—despite his small private admiration for that shilly-shallying abstraction — had never, it need hardly be said, dawned upon his imagination. He scoffed openly at the manifestations of this change of popular opinion whenever they came under his notice, but though he scoffed, it must be owned that in his heart of hearts he was rather pleased than otherwise. Can you, after all, blame him? What friendly-minded man, who has been condemned for years to a winter of black looks, averted eyes, and all the hundred and one petty proofs of inveterate dislike, can avoid a certain thrill of pleasure when suddenly brows clear, hats are doffed, and faces beam with delight at his approach. The temptation to sue for an ephemeral popularity is greater perhaps in Ireland than in any other country in the world, for the reason that in none is the reward so spontaneous. The proverbial smiles and frowns of her climate are not more start-

ling in their transitions than are the often equally unaccountable ones of her sons. Certainly that Mr O'Brien, and all the tenants on the estate, and all the other cottars and small people round about, should be of one mind upon any subject, and that subject a murder, was a sufficiently surprising fact to be worth recording! There were differences, it is true. Whereas he genuinely believed Hurrish to have had nothing at all to do with the matter, they as genuinely believed him to have done it deliberately, and applauded him heartily in consequence. The difference you will say is considerable, but practically it came to much the same thing in the end.

It happened that the week after these events had occurred, Mr O'Brien's solitude was broken in upon by the advent of a nephew, one Thomond O'Brien—a name that awakens stirring memories in Clare. This Thomond was a son of his youngest brother, and had been wont to spend his holidays under his uncle's roof—indeed Pierce O'Brien, having only daughters, had come to regard the lad in the light of a son. And a very masterful son he had proved, his holiday having invariably been the signal for a sort of pandemonium and wild licence let loose upon Donore. He had danced jigs with the maid-servants; made bonfires on all the hills around; visited every wake, faction-fight, and wedding he could hear of in the neighbourhood; wasted everybody's time; made everybody run hither and thither to do his errands, and been universally adored — as no O'Brien since '48 probably had been adored.

He was only eighteen now, and five years in her Majesty's navy had not entirely subdued the native

humours of his blood. He descended upon Donore and its inhabitants as upon a conquered country, which he proceeded at once to parcel out as seemed good in his sight. As he drove along on the car from the station, his small, sharp, brown eyes gazed around him right and left with the conquering glance of a Napoleon. To him it was all still the "kingdom" of the O'Briens.

To any one who only skims the merest surface of things, there is no lack of "divarsion," happily, still extant in Ireland. The fun, it is true, is on the surface, the bitterness, discord, misery down at the roots, in a distracted present and an unforgotten past. Poor Pierce O'Brien knew this uglier side of the shield only too well. The weight of it had eaten into his heart, and into the very marrow of his bones. He was not so ossified in gloom, however, as to refuse to hail the diversion with a feeling of satisfaction. As for young Thomond, he simply and honestly disbelieved in the gloomier side of things altogether. As for his uncle Pierce having ever been in peril of his life—that he dismissed as utterly incredible and monstrous!—a fiction of "the Government" and the police. They were always getting up some cock-and-bull stories or other; they had nothing else, poor devils, in his opinion, to do!

He had not been half-a-dozen hours in the place before everything was turned inside out, and put upon a new footing. He got out the boat, which had long slumbered, half full of water, in its moss-grown boat-house, and had it cleaned and baled. One man was despatched for a mop, another for a landing-net, a third had to go and dig bait, a fourth

was sent flying to Tubbamina for more fishing-line. Young Thomond had inherited a considerable smack of the old Thomond's ways, and had remarkably clear views on the subject of getting himself obeyed, and obeyed sure enough he was. There was more work done and more activity displayed in that one morning at Donore than there had been for months, nay, years past; but then everybody had something to do that was not precisely his own business, and that in Ireland is an enormous incentive to industry.

Pierce O'Brien stood looking on, lifting his eyebrows, mocking at the boy, but pleased the while. Young Thomond was not by any means pleased. He complained that everything had got into a shameful state of disorganisation during his absence.

"I say, what on earth have they been doing to the trout?" he inquired, indignantly. "That Pat O'Gorman says there's hardly any in the lake now, and they used to be as thick as peas."

"Poached," his uncle responded, laconically.

"Poached! I'd poach them! Why don't you catch half-a-dozen, and run them in?"

"In where?"

"Into jail; or give them a right good hiding. That's what I'd do if I were you."

"They are very much more likely to give me a hiding," Mr O'Brien replied mildly.

Half an hour later—

"I say, those fellows of yours are the greatest lot of muffs I ever saw in my life. They're not worth twopence the whole box and dice of them. Can't we shunt them, and get some one else? What's become of that big fellow, Hurrish O'Brien, who used to fish

with us? Send off for him. He's worth a dozen of these butter-fingers. He used to be a nailer, I remember, at night-lines."

"Unfortunately he has been what you call 'run in.'"

"Hurrish run in? Good Lord! what for? Not for poaching?"

"Worse than poaching."

"*Worse!* What's worse than poaching?"

"Murder."

Young Thomond's jaw dropped, and he nearly let the line he was reeling fall on to the grass.

"Murder! Look here, I say, uncle, don't chaff a fellow," he said, indignantly.

"I'm not chaffing, unfortunately."

"Why, do you mean to say—— Pooh! it's preposterous. Why, he used to be the decentest fellow we had."

"So he is still."

"Then why do you say he's murdered some one?"

"*I* don't say it. On the contrary, I don't believe it."

"Who does then?"

"The Government."

"The *Government!* What business, I should like to know, has the Government to interfere with *our* people? Who do they say he's murdered?"

"A man called Mat Brady."

"I remember. Big ugly brute, with a jaw like a hippopotamus, and a coxy brother. I don't expect *he's* any loss, anyhow."

"Perhaps not. Still you see brutes—at least when they happen to have only two legs—can't be killed with impunity, can they?"

Young Thomond shook his head, declining to commit himself to any decision. It was his fixed opinion that his uncle's laxity in his dealings with his "people" was at the bottom of half what was amiss on the property. If Irish country gentlemen —those of the old stock particularly—would only put their feet down resolutely, encourage the decent fellows, drive all the agitators into the sea, and bid the English Government mind its own affairs and leave the management of Ireland to *them*, everything, in that clear-sighted young gentleman's opinion, would go as it ought to do.

The dinner-bell rang, and he was obliged to suspend his operations, and allow his exhausted assistants to retire, worn out by the unusual labours of the day, to their respective homes. At dinner his uncle gave him an outline of the events of the past week, not without some satisfaction in finding an auditor to whom to recount his version of the points at issue between himself and Sub-inspector Higgins. Young Thomond more than accepted that view, and would willingly have gone off there and then to do battle with the miserable official who had dared to come between the O'Brien and his own. Who should decide whether they were guilty or not except their own landlord? His five years in her Majesty's navy notwithstanding, the young gentleman possessed, it will be observed, a cargo of ideas of a truly distressingly antiquated description. He was a survival, a forgotten fragment, a small leaf from the fallen tree of the past. "Our people," "our ways," "our land," "our country," were words never out of his mouth. That an O'Brien should be the

father and protector of his people, and that they in return should yield him a loyalty which stopped short at nothing, even death, seemed to him the most commonplace of self-evident propositions. Where precisely the boy had acquired these very defunct ideas of his it would be difficult to say. Absence, no doubt, had a good deal to say to them, and had fed a stream which flowed naturally in his blood. He had been travelling backwards while the country and the world had been travelling forwards. Those five years too during which he had been away had been five very momentous ones, it must be remembered.

For the next few days he was too busy getting everything to his liking at Donore, and issuing his orders, to have time for any longer excursion; but the third day after his arrival he set off by himself to Gortnacoppin to inspect the scene of the outrage, not without a private belief that his observation would probably be equal to alighting upon some clue, which the police and "Government" between them had hitherto failed to discover.

Leaving the edge of the lake, he clambered up the ridge which rose immediately above it, and got upon that narrow stony pathway which, as the reader may remember, ran past the Bradys' house until it joined the high-road, from which point you diverged a little lower down into the Gortnacoppin valley. It was all part of the Donore property, and our young friend looked round him, therefore, with all the gravity of a responsible guardian, innocent of a certain redoubtable Land Bill, which was at that very moment hovering in the air, and upon the point of descending.

He paused a moment before the Bradys' house,

and shook his head with an air of reprobation. He did not remember for the moment who it belonged to, but its aspect of filth and desolation scandalised him. A little further down, on a small eminence to the left of the road, he noticed a young man sitting by himself, whose appearance rather perplexed him. He was not a gentleman, certainly, and yet, still more forcibly, he was not a frieze-coated "tinint," and anything between these two alternatives was foreign to his previous experiences at Donore. When he got as close as the path ran to the spot, he perceived that it was no other than that "coxy brother" of the man whom Hurrish O'Brien was accused of murdering, and whose farm, he now remembered, covered this part of the hill. This did not seem to him to be any reason for not stopping and speaking. He had always been in the habit of speaking to every one connected with the estate, and, without actually formulating that opinion, had always concluded, in a general way, that his notice could never be anything but gratifying to the recipient of it.

"Hullo! How d'ye do?" he called out, stopping short and nodding his head in a friendly fashion. "You're Maurice Brady, aren't you? Didn't recognise you at first. You hadn't grown a moustache when I sailed, and that changes a fellow so. Every one is changed about here, I think, except some of the old chaps—they don't alter much."

He had got over the fence while he was speaking, and advanced, holding out his hand with the utmost affability. Maurice Brady, however, drew back as precipitately as if a sociable rattlesnake or cobra had been presented at him. It was impossible for him to

have encountered any one more intensely irritating to him in his present frame of mind than this complacent little sailor, who looked as if the world at large, and Donore in particular, was a sort of holiday kingdom, specially laid out for his entertainment; who had that air too of unconscious patronage which, of all varieties of the human manner, was to Maurice Brady the most insufferable upon earth. Even at the shop he had always, whenever it was possible, avoided having any intercourse with men of his own age—those, that is, who stood upon a higher social platform than his own. Ladies he did not so much mind. His self-confidence had its effect upon them; besides, a shopman is always naturally, and as it were officially, the superior of his female customers. He told himself that the reason of this dislike was on account of his deep-laid democratic convictions: it was unendurable to him to see a fellow-creature who appeared to think himself better than another. In reality, however, it was rather that he was conscious of his democratic convictions not being quite so deep as they ought to have been. The will was there, but the power, unfortunately, was wanting. No Irishman —no Irishman born of peasant parents at any rate —is ever genuinely and at heart a democrat. The whole theory is exotic—never has been, and never will be, otherwise. Maurice Brady had done his utmost to assimilate it, but had failed, and the struggle told upon his manner. Instead of that mixture of easy courtesy and self-respect which becomes a polite citizen and an equal, it had alternations from suppressed servility to open surliness, and of this he was too intelligent not to be himself aware.

Young Thomond, though a little surprised at his manner, merely thought that he was taken by surprise, and awkward in consequence. Very likely he was shy—fellows were apt to be shy when they were spoken to by their betters. That any man in young Brady's position could fail to be gratified by being noticed by one in his—Thomond O'Brien's—was an idea which would have required a great many convincing proofs to impress upon his mind.

"I say, what an awful thing that was about your brother," he began again in a tone of eager cordiality. "It's perfectly scandalous to think of fellows being murdered like that in broad daylight, and not a soul found to give evidence about it. Of course, though, *you* don't believe this ridiculous story the Government have got hold of against Hurrish O'Brien? Why, he is the *last* man that would have done such a thing! My uncle has the highest opinion of him possible, and so have *I*."

He waited a moment, but as the other still said nothing, went on again. "I remember his bringing you over with him once to Donore when you were a little bit of a chap. He was always the decentest fellow out and out about the place, and the best tenant too. I'd rather have him than a whole cargo of the rest!" Another pause, and then: "Look here, I say, you *don't* believe this rubbish of his having anything to say to it, do you?" he added sharply, irritated by the other's persistent silence.

Maurice's brows had been growing darker and darker.

"I'm not going for to say whether I do or I don't," he said sullenly. "If you want to find out

about it, you'll have to wait till the 'sizes. You'll hear enough of it then, or you can read about it in the newspapers. If Hurrish O'Brien is innocent, he'll be able to prove it fast enough; and if he's guilty, it don't make much matter what other people think about him, only what the jury think."

Young Thomond's open boyish face darkened sensibly, and he drew his short little sailorly figure up to its full height. He was quick to catch a hostile note; and that the fellow meant, as he put it to himself, to "give cheek," there could be very little doubt.

"My uncle and I are *certain* he had nothing to say to it," he said in his lordliest tone and air.

"Oh, you *are*, are you? Then that settles the matter, *of* course!" Maurice Brady replied with a bitter sneer.

The blood flew to young O'Brien's cheek, and he made half a step forward. Another minute and his fists would have been in the other's face. Maurice watched him with a sullen gleam of satisfaction. Nothing could have pleased him better or done him more good at that moment than to have had a hand-to-hand tussle with this complacent young sprig of landlordism. He felt a savage delight in the mere thought of having him by the throat and pounding that patronising face of his into a jelly. For a moment the two antagonists measured one another with their eyes. Maurice was by several years the elder, and a good four inches the taller. On the other hand, young O'Brien was a mass of muscle, strong as a bull-dog, and active as a cat—a fighter, too, by birth, instinct, and profession, which Maurice

was not. Had the struggle come on, a good judge would certainly have laid the betting upon the smaller man. Happily for the interests of peace, young Thomond's pride was at least as strong as his pugnacity. What, come to fisticuffs with the brother of a "tinint"! condescend to a scuffle by the roadside! He, an O'Brien of Donore! He clenched his hands tight, and rammed them down to the very bottom of his pockets as a preservation against temptation; looked the other in the face exactly between the two eyes; turned upon his heels, stalked back to the fence, clambering over it with as much dignity as was consistent with his haste, and marched rapidly away down the road—his head in the air, his shoulders squared, his foolish young face red as a turkey-cock's with suppressed passion.

He quite forgot in his excitement his intention of visiting Gortnacoppin, upon which he was steadily turning his back; forgot everything but the fact that he—a gentleman—an officer in her Majesty's navy—an O'Brien of Donore—had been insulted, deliberately "cheeked" upon his own lands by a common fellow, a tenant on the estate. Once he halted with a sudden impulse of turning back, and showing the fellow which was the better man. His blood was up, and thirsty for the fray. He would willingly have given five years' pay at that moment to have been free to gratify the impulse. He drove it back again resolutely, however, and marched on. No, he would not, he would *not*. If it had been a stranger, —a man with whom he had no connection,—he would have allowed himself the gratification in an

instant. But a "tinint," a fellow "off the estate," —a thousand times no; pride, honour, everything forbade it. To abstain was gall and wormwood, but to yield would have been a thousand times worse. A gentleman had to pay, after all, for being a gentleman. No man, he reflected, could expect to be born an O'Brien of Donore for nothing!

CHAPTER XVIII.

MAURICE TRIUMPHS OVER ALL HIS ENEMIES.

Maurice Brady looked after his retreating figure with a fierce scowl upon his handsome face. "Got rid of *you* pretty easily, me fine fellar," he said aloud. "You didn't take much to put you off fighting! no stomach for it, had you, me young cock?" He knew very well that it was not the case,—that pride, not want of pluck, was what had hindered the other from facing him. But even so, and though there was no one by to hear him, it did him good to say it.

Matters had been growing worse and worse since the day of his brother's death. The storm of indignation which his denouncement of Hurrish had created, far from subsiding, was growing louder and louder every day. Even at the funeral—which, despite the elder Brady's unpopularity, had been largely attended —not a soul had spoken to him. He had been tabooed, sent to Coventry—"boycotted," in short. He had returned the following day to Miltown-Malbay, but

his position there was, as he soon discovered, if possible worse, in so far that it brought him more forcibly into contact with others. So intolerable was it, that a few days afterwards he gave notice to the master of the shop, and left hastily. The sudden revulsion from popularity to contempt and execration was horrible to him. The very men who had admired, followed, imitated him, were now the loudest in denouncing him. The whole of that anti-English, anti-legal machinery which he had so often gloried in, which he counted so fully on making use of for his own ends, was turned against him. He was in direct opposition to the whole popular sentiment of the country. An informer! What more was there to be said?

There was something bewildering to a man like Maurice Brady in the suddenness of this downfall. He had been sailing along so successfully; so buoyantly confident of the future; so absolutely secure of his own powers. And now! The rapidity of the fall made him feel literally sick. He could have torn his hair, gnashed his teeth, and rolled over and over on the ground from sheer bitterness of rage and disappointment. He was done for! That was the long and short of it. Everything was at an end. His career wrecked,—finished before it had fairly begun. Not in Clare alone, but from one end of Ireland to the other, his name was the signal, he knew, for contempt and execration. Never would any Irish constituency open its doors to receive him; never would his voice be heard in the halls of Westminster, or anywhere nearer home either; never would a single one of those visions of success and triumph, upon

which he had floated so securely, now come true! Even his life as an obscure individual would, he foresaw, be made intolerable. As soon as the trial was over, he would have, in all probability, to leave the country. Nay, the voice of execration would pursue him, he knew well, from one end of the world to the other. Wherever an Irishman was to be found—no mean area nowadays—there he should find an enemy. Was ever such cursed spite? Did ever so damnable a fate befall a brilliant and spirited young man before?

He could not turn back either, even had he wished to do so. He had given his evidence, and, whether he liked it or not, at the next assizes of Ennis he must assuredly appear. He was not at all sure that he *did* wish it. Anger against Hurrish was fast becoming, not merely a secondary, but a primary motive. His imagination—so vivid in everything that concerned himself—ran perpetually forward to all the ignominy that he had still to endure, and backward to Hurrish as the direct cause of it all. He ground his teeth with a vindictive fury that was fast effacing all earlier reminiscences of gratitude and kindliness. They should see,—those fools who turned their backs upon him—that insolent young spark who had just left him,—they should see, he thought, whether their pet could get out of his scrape as easily as they imagined. If there was justice—his favourite formula—in Ireland or out of it, Hurrish O'Brien, he swore, should have the benefit of it.

He had been sitting there chewing the cud of his anger for about half an hour after young Thomond had left him, when another figure appeared in sight,

coming down that little frequented path,—a stout roundabout figure in a suit of black broadcloth, with a high hat of surpassing shininess—a shininess so surpassing, that it seemed to reflect the sunlight like a crow's back or a newly polished pair of shoes. It was Father Denahy, the parish priest of Tubbamina.

Maurice half rose with an impulse to escape. A second impulse made him seat himself again. Father Denahy, as every one knew, had the eye of a hawk for a recusant parishioner. Better stay where he was than have the ignominy of being pursued, as pursue him he knew very well his reverence would, if he wanted him. In three minutes more the priest was on a level with him, and had made a halt in the middle of the pathway, exactly as young O'Brien had done. He was a big heavy-jawed man, with cheeks somewhat upon the pattern of those of a cod-fish. At the first glance he looked exactly like all the rest of his order, who to an outsider seem often as difficult to know apart as the individuals of a flight of crows. Closer observation, however, disclosed a peculiar kindliness, a sort of exuding benevolence in the big loose-lipped mouth, and small, round, keen-looking eyes. He had a warm heart, a sharp temper, and a Johnsonian capability for hatred. He kept the last two for his political enemies, but his kindliness was all given to his flock.

"And is that you, Maurice Brady, sittin' there, and your parish priest standing opposite to you?" he began, in an irregularly pitched Kerry brogue, and a tone of surprised remonstrance.

Maurice rose sullenly. He would have given a great deal to be able to turn on his heel and walk

indifferently off; but thus openly to insult his "clargy" was more than at present he could venture upon.

"I've been wanting this week past to have some words with you," Father Denahy went on in a more placable tone, "so I'm glad to see you where we are to our two selves. 'Tis a long time since you were at confession, Maurice Brady," he added with sudden sharpness.

To this the other made no reply. If he had spoken at all, it would have been to inform the priest that he had no intention of ever going to confession again. Confession! He knew better than to be taken in by *that* stale trick!

"Will I expect you to-morrow? 'Tis the day, you know."

Still no answer.

Father Denahy waited a minute. His anger was rising, for there was an unmistakable air of contempt about the young man's manner. He was too wise, however, to press that particular point further. He knew the character of each of his parishioners intimately, and was aware that Maurice Brady was a very awkward fish to tackle, much more likely to break away altogether than to yield to any pastoral angling, however dexterous. After a minute, therefore, he began again with a fresh cast.

"This has been a black week for you, me son," he said gravely—"a black week for others too. Those poor O'Briens! I've been round to their house just now, and 'tis a sad sight! To think of Hurrish O'Brien in Ennis jail!—Hurrish that was the credit of the parish—never a day short in his dues, and

the best of sons and fathers,—a good father to you, too, Maurice Brady, when you wanted one badly," he added significantly.

He watched narrowly, to see if there were any indications of yielding, but there was not an atom. Maurice's pale handsome face was like a stone mask, and his eyes had a cold light in them that was not encouraging.

His reverence tried another fly.

"I was speaking to Alley Sheehan. Poor innicent young creature! 'tis a sad sorrow to be laid on her, and she so young. I used to think wan of these days you and she, Maurice, would have been coming and asking me to give the Church's blessing on you both. Maybe, though, I was wrong?"

Again he paused and watched narrowly. He knew as well as the young man himself did, that he and Alley had been engaged to be married. It was better, however, if possible, to surprise an admission than to take it for granted.

This time Maurice was less indifferent. He was thinking rapidly. He was as anxious to marry Alley as ever, and if forced to leave Ireland, as seemed inevitable, his wish was to take her with him. He had enough money to be able to make a fresh start in some new place; and to leave her behind, to hear of her marrying some other fellow, was simply intolerable to him. That if he called upon her to come, she would do so at once, he had not a doubt; but in that case it would certainly be necessary for them to call in Father Denahy's assistance, as nothing, he knew, would have induced her to wait to be married till they were in America, or wherever he might

finally decide to go. These thoughts produced at once a corresponding effect upon his manner.

"You're right there, Father Denahy," he said in a tone of suitable respect. "Alley Sheehan and me have understood one another this good while back, and please goodness, we'll be asking your reverence to make man and wife of us some of these fine days, and before very long too, most like."

Father Denahy's small eyes gleamed. His last hook had struck home.

"So soon as you've done helping to hang Hurrish O'Brien, is it?" he inquired mildly.

Maurice started. Even to himself the words had a hideous sound. He rallied quickly, however.

"'Tis himself that's doing that, not me," he said angrily. "Do you think I'd let my brother Mat be killed, and the man that did it go free? If you do, you must think me the meanest-spirited beast that crawls upon the face of th' earth!"

"I think you've about the blackest and the hardest heart between this and Cork, Maurice Brady; and that, if you wish to know, is what I do think," the priest retorted as sharply. "I don't believe there's another—least, I hope an' pray to God there's not—would have thought ov doing what you've done. Denouncing him that's given you meat and sup, and been better nor a father to you! Giving him up to those that care no more, for the most part, than the crows do, whether a man's innocent or not, so they can clap him in prison. Why, a *haythen* wouldn't do such a thing—not a black haythen—so he wouldn't."

The attack was vigorous, and might have been effective if brought to bear upon another man, but it

was mistaken as directed against Maurice Brady. He was one to whom opposition only supplies a stimulating prick of excitement. Whatever he might feel alone—face to face at once with the future and the past—in the presence of an opponent he became hard and fixed as a rock. A priest's opinion, too, was the last that would have moved him. Like most advanced Irishmen of his day, it was a distinctive "note" with him to abjure all priestly authority, and utterly to deride the presumption of one of that order pretending to interfere in politics or anything else—strictly sacerdotal matters, of course, excepted. His naturally supercilious face took a cold repellent air, and he eyed the worthy priest with a smile that was not, however, unaccompanied by considerable inward rage.

"Sure don't we know your reverence is always mightily partial to Hurrish O'Brien?" he said, with a sneer he no longer attempted to conceal. "'Tisn't every man puts his clergy before everything else nowadays; nor 'tisn't every one would let his own kith and kin starve or eat dirt, so they had the fat of the land. Many's the fine chicken and turkey will find its way to other quarters than it does if Hurrish O'Brien was once out of it for good and all."

Father Denahy's broad ruddy face grew purple, and the veins in his forehead swelled with the effort to repress his rage. He had too much self-respect, however, to descend to the level of a scolding match, or to remain measuring swords with an antagonist who not merely had no respect for his cloth, but actually made it a ground for reproach.

"Hearken to me, Maurice Brady, and mind what

I'm saying to you, for these are the last words of mine maybe you'll hear," he said emphatically. "I denounce you! I throw you off! I've done with you for good and all, for better or worse, from this day forth and for evermore! Never say you were raised in my parish, for I wouldn't have no one think it. I wouldn't have any one suppose I'd ought to do with such a black-hearted miscreant—false to his Church and his friends, and everything he ought for to vinerate. From this day out, you're to me as if you were dead or had never been born; and so good-day, and the Lord have mercy on you, Mister Maurice Brady!"

And with a gesture of renouncement of his two uplifted hands, that was not without a certain sturdy dignity, Father Denahy stalked away down the road, leaving Maurice, for the second time that afternoon, victor upon the field.

If he had been disposed to espouse Hurrish's cause before, it is only admitting he was human to say that the worthy priest was about ten thousand times more disposed to espouse it now. From a merely parochial matter, it had all at once sprung into a personal one—to ensure an acquittal being an object for which he felt prepared to strain every nerve. Probably in his heart of hearts he did believe him to have been guilty; but he also, with perfect honesty, believed that a greater injury would be done by his being condemned than by his being acquitted. Hurrish—some slight peccadillos apart—had always been a credit to the parish—a good son, husband, father, neighbour, Catholic. For such a one to be hung, or thrust into that sink of iniquity, an English prison,

would, in Father Denahy's eyes, have been a disaster of the first magnitude—an injury at once to public morals and to the man's own soul. He was a warm-hearted man, and—despite Maurice Brady's sneer—by no means a particularly grasping one,—a peccadillo which the circumstances of their lot is apt, it must be owned, to engender in his cloth. He hated England, it is true, and the English Government, and the English connection, and everything that even remotely pertained to it, with a deadly hatred, which no benefits, let them be never so accumulated, could in any degree have modified, and which he had proved upon a dozen platforms; but that was perhaps his only serious failing.

Yet what had this same detested England done to him, after all, some impatient reader will perhaps exclaim, that such a sentiment—intelligible enough once—should be preserved, like a fossil scorpion or other bottled venom, to the misery and undoing of two countries? That, I reply with the shrug of the exponent, is an excellent, nay, an unanswerable argument, dear sir, in logic, but no argument at all, unfortunately, to a deep-seated, to all appearances an ineradicable, sense of injury, which has its seat, not in the brains at all, but in the blood. Hate, once engendered there—kept alive from generation to generation—becomes engrained, like gout or any other hereditary disease; and the physician who will undertake to cure it has yet, it is to be feared, to be born. When he is, the Irish problem will *begin* to be solved.

Maurice Brady, left alone meanwhile victorious upon his hillock, was not at first without a few slightly uncomfortable sensations. A priest's curse

(and Father Denahy's parting words, if not quite amounting to that, had certainly gone some way in that direction) could hardly fail to excite the imagination of one who, let his private emancipation be ever so complete, was still a Catholic, and the son of Catholic peasants. He shook off the feeling, however, with no very great difficulty. After all, what could Father Denahy *do?*—that was the question; and he was materialist enough not to trouble his head very greatly about any other.

Before many minutes had passed, he had left off thinking about that side of the matter, and had turned to thinking of another—of Alley Sheehan,—that subject having been brought into prominence by the priest's words. He had always, as we know, taken his engagement to that modest little maiden with a very leisurely and lordly ease—nay, had wondered at himself not unfrequently for having ever entertained such an idea at all. It was a case of Cophetua and the beggar-maid—a condescension only to be accounted for by that accident of beauty which had raised one whom he would never otherwise have looked at into a thing to be desired—an object which even the lordliest male could hardly pass over without desiring to appropriate. Possibly the fact of this slighting habit of regarding her had, by a not uncommon nemesis, caused her image to strike deeper into his breast than it would otherwise have done. At any rate, in the first heat of his fury against Hurrish, he had told himself emphatically that everything was now at an end between them. It would be intolerable to him to be married to one who, though no real blood relationship connected them, would still hourly

and momently remind him of his brother's murderer. A little experience, however, proved that it was easier for him to make up his mind to cast her off than actually to do so. Though of a distinctly amorous turn by nature, he had somehow never had a genuine love affair, save with this poor little Alley. Others whom he might have been disposed to court were out of his reach; while the ordinary bouncing damsels of his own class—such, for instance, as Sal Connor—were unmistakably not to his taste. Alley's very simplicity, humility, and deep-rooted piety were perhaps all the more seductive from their utter unlikeness to anything in himself; at any rate, he found his thoughts of late recurring to her with a frequency that was almost humiliating. Every fresh slight he received, every fresh proof that his boasted power over his contemporaries was gone for ever, sent his thoughts flying with greater vehemence in her direction. He longed, as he had never longed before, to find himself beside her—to be soothed by her gentle voice, to look into the mild light of her great grey eyes. In the first maddening smart of newly wounded egotism some such tender, unexacting affection — a soft tone to soothe, a pair of admiring eyes in which he still stands as the chief of heroes—is to a man of Maurice Brady's temperament not merely a want, but an absolute craving necessity.

Since the day he had left her half fainting upon the rocks, they had hardly seen anything of one another. Once when he had joined her for a few minutes on coming out of mass, it had seemed to him that she shrank away—probably, he told himself, from fear of a quarrel arising between him and

some of the O'Brien faction. He, too, had a keen dislike to anything of the sort, and this had prevented him going to see her at the cabin. Now, however, he resolved that he must do so. Apart from his own imperious need of her, it was absolutely necessary that they should have a serious talk before the trial came on. His first intention of shielding her had given way by this time to a realisation of the absolute necessity of her appearing as a witness. No summons had as yet, he believed, been issued, but he was aware that one would have to be. His own evidence, in fact, depended largely upon being supported by hers, and it would be essential, therefore, to prepare her mind for this necessity.

Not without an effort—for his memory was naturally a tenacious one—he had succeeded in placing his brother's fate, and his own duty as the avenger of that fate, in the very front of his consciousness, and of fixing all his thoughts upon it. It was the only plank of self-respect which he had now to cling to, and to secure such a plank was, to a man of his type, an absolute necessity. The very price he had paid for it decided that. To take a step which ruins your whole life, brands you in every one's eyes as a heartless traitor, leaves you the mark for every kind of insult and reprobation, and after all fails—recoils with annihilating effect upon yourself, but hurts absolutely nobody else! Could anything be conceived more utterly unendurable to a man to whom power in some form or other had always been the one possession which his soul imperiously craved—the vision of his whole life? He resolved that he would at once seek out Alley, explain the whole matter to her, and

impress upon her the absolute necessity of being guided, not by any of the O'Brien lot, but exclusively by *his* judgment and directions. Then, when he had made this perfectly clear to her, and had received her promises, he would reassure her with regard to any of those fears which she might naturally have entertained as to his deserting her. Poor little Alley! Poor, soft, gentle, dependent creature! How happy it would make her to know that all was still right between them! that whatever else happened, she would always have a protector—a kind, generous, affectionate protector—in him! To be able to gratify one's own strongest wishes, and at the same time to perform a truly generous and magnanimous action,—surely this is the very climax of satisfaction!

CHAPTER XIX.

TEAMPULL A PHOILL.

There was a spot, not a quarter of a mile from Hurrish's cabin, which was a favourite resort of Alley's, and near enough, fortunately, for her to be able to escape there and return almost without her tyrant perceiving her absence. It was a tiny valley, deep in the rich grass of the Burren, sunk like an open shaft in the middle of the rocks; and in the centre of this small enclosure rose, grey amongst the greenness, the remains of no less than five chapels and monastic buildings, ruined and roofless, but, with the persist-

ence of their wonderful masonry, resisting century after century all the efforts of rain and wind storm to subjugate and utterly make an end of them.

Though later by some centuries than the barely human wigwam-like oratories of Gortnacoppin, their origin and the date of the original settlement of their monkish architects seem to be equally lost in the mists of the Atlantic. All that is known is that a certain St Mhic Duagh, after whom the oldest of them is called, lived here, and that the date of the newest and largest — known as Teampull a Phoill —is believed by experts to be about the middle of the tenth century. A small stream runs down the middle of this tiny valley—a gay, dancing, rippling thread of water, clear as crystal—glad, apparently, of the sunshine and the freedom, but, like all other Burren streams and rivers, rushing back again underground, as if startled, with a wild hurry-scurry of excited bubbles, a few hundred yards lower down.

Coming upon it unexpectedly, there is something singularly winning in the aspect of this little grassy retreat — stolen, as it were, from the surrounding savagery. Ruined as its buildings are, there yet lingers a distinctively human look about the whole —an air of expectancy and invitation—which somehow thrills the heart. The stream, the well, the bright yellow lichens of the walls, the broken cross which stands at the entrance of the "ahaliah" or sacred enclosure, the well-worn door-steps trodden into a curve, where century after century the naked or sandal-shod feet of the monks trooped to their daily portion of prayers, — the whole scene has a completeness, a look of habitation, that speaks of long

usage. There is none of that cold and repellent grimness which generally hangs over such husks and shells of discarded habitations. Masses of honeysuckle and dog-roses hang from the crevices of the rocks; the floor of the valley is blue in spring-time with small dainty-flowered harebells, or white with tiny bed-straws. Huge flowering leeks—a legacy, it is said, of the monks—stand crowded into a sheltered corner; and in the actual doorway of the largest church an ash seed — fallen Heaven knows how or from where!—has taken root between the top of the jamb and the next stone to it, sprung into a tree—the largest possibly in the Burren—and, summer after summer, waves its feathery festoons in youthful verdant triumph over its time-worn protector.

Alley loved this little glen with a sort of personal love. The sternness of those interminable platforms of rock above often pained her eyes, the wide-reaching panorama chilled her spirit, but this little enclosed spot, speaking of peace, faith, long continuance, filled her mind with images of a tender and homely tranquillity.

One morning, a few weeks after Hurrish had been committed to prison, and not very long before the time fixed for the trial, she had finished her work early, and had betaken herself here as usual, carrying her knitting with her. It was one of those sunless, rainless, vacant-looking days, very characteristic of these western solitudes. Further inland it would probably have been hot; but here, upon the very brim of the Atlantic, the air was alive, though there was very little of it—hardly enough to stir the grass,

or the leaves of the great tree-mallows which rose in a towering cluster out of the nettles by the little well. It was wonderfully dreamy in that narrow flowery nook in the middle of the desolate Burren. All the bees that ever visited that unprofitable hunting-ground seemed to have collected about the masses of yellow trefoil which linked the grass and rocks; a pair of water-wagtails were flirting upon the brink of the stream; a flight of fieldfares kept precipitating themselves like schoolboys, now to one side, now to the other, of the glen; and overhead the wild remote cry of a passing sea-gull fell from time to time upon the ear.

Alley was feeling tired, and glad to get away from the harsh, raucous voice of her old tyrant—glad to rest in the warm soft air, so comforting and so kindly. She sat quietly for some time upon the edge of the well, with her knitting in her hand, looking down into the water. Though called a well, it was in reality a spring, bubbling freshly out of the ground, and enclosed with a low wall consisting of single blocks of stone laid side by side without mortar. A collection of queer-looking objects lay at the bottom, which, upon closer inspection, were seen to be fishing-hooks, buttons, bits of tape, needles and pins, and similar articles, thrown in from time to time as votive-offerings. Alley looked down at them meditatively, wondering who the different ones had belonged to, and what their owners had wished to get in return for them. The fish-hooks no doubt were for St Mac Dara, the chief Connaught patron of fishermen, to whose chapel upon the Oilian Mac Dara opposite all passing sails were bound to lower

twice, on pain of speedy shipwreck. The buttons and tapes had nearly melted away, and the needles and pins had become so rusty that they might easily have been mistaken for small twigs or straws. It looked, Alley thought, as if the saint upon whom they had been bestowed had not found any use for them.

Sounds travel far in stony and vacant regions like the Burren, where there are no houses, trees, or fences to break it. Alley had not sat very long upon the edge of her well before a sound reached her, — a sound of footsteps, first in the distance, then drawing nearer, and evidently coming directly towards her. There was no path to the glen, and so completely was it out of the ordinary track that except when, under some special impulse of devotion, a woman came and threw a pin or button into the well—an event which rarely happened—she had the place to herself. Who could it be? she wondered. A man evidently, by the tread. Her thoughts flew instinctively to Hurrish, and then stopped short with a sudden pang. Whoever else it was, poor Hurrish, alas! it certainly could not be.

She was not long kept in doubt. Another minute and Maurice Brady's head appeared on the ridge above, near where a gap left between the rock and the wall of one of the chapels led into the glen. He came down the narrow passage with a slow, deliberate step, reached the cross which stood in the centre of the little valley, and stood there, his arms crossed in his favourite Emmet attitude upon his chest, looking down at her without speaking, while she, on her side, looked up, startled, wondering what he was going to

say. Had anything fresh happened? Why had he come there to look for her, she wondered?

Certainly a magnificent actor, no less than a magnificent demagogue, was lost in Maurice Brady! He had all the dramatic instincts, the realisation of the value of "pose," the ready alternatives from appeal to denunciation, from denunciation to appeal, the cold, quick, dominating eye, necessary for the histrionic side of the latter part. His present intention was to overawe, and even, if necessary, a little alarm Alley, in order the better to impress upon her the absolute necessity of obeying his directions, and abiding by his judgment in contradistinction to that of any of the O'Briens. Then—when he had firmly established this in her mind—he would reward her by suddenly relaxing into greater tenderness, a warmer show of affection than he had ever exhibited before. He had an intense need, as we have seen, of finding some one over whom he could still rule—with whom his influence was still paramount,—a soft, tender yielding some one, who would soothe his smarting egotism, repay his lordly kindness with a woman's tenderness—above all, admire and love him. It was impossible for him to suppose that Alley had ceased to do so—ceased to look with pride to the thought of being his wife. What he conceived was that she had been teased, threatened perhaps, into promising to do everything in her power to screen Hurrish, should she be called upon as a witness. And this he felt that it behoved him to put a stop to at once—firmly, emphatically.

"It's a long while since I've seen you, Alley dear," he began, gently.

"Yis, indade, Maurice."

"This has been a bad time for us all, Alley!"

"'T has indade, Maurice."

Then there was a little pause before he began again.

"I'm sorry to have to let you stop on there"—pointing his finger in the direction of Hurrish's house. "And if I could have taken you out of it, you should have been took before this; but, please goodness, you'll not be in it long now."

He had planned this speech beforehand, as the most effective method he could conceive of proving to her that she would be expected to give up all future connection or intimacy with the O'Briens. Alley, however, merely opened her great eyes wonderingly.

"An' why wudn't I shtop in it, Maurice? Sure where ilse have I iver shtopped?" she inquired, simply.

It was not a particularly easy question to answer, seeing that there was nowhere else for her to go to, and that she certainly never had "shtopped" anywhere else. It irritated Maurice into quitting his calm tone for a more authoritative one.

"You can't *wish* to stop in the house of a man that's done what Hurrish has, surely, Alley?" he said, energetically. Then, as she still showed no symptoms at all of agreement, "Is it in the house of a *murderer?*" he added, harshly.

Alley winced, and quivered from head to foot. The bolt went straight home, and shot its cruel dart through and through her delicate sensitive frame. They were terrible words for her to hear—they were

cruel ones too, and, to her thinking, wicked ones, angering almost as much as they frightened her. All the more for their very cruelty—nay, for their very truthfulness—she gathered her powers to resist them. A tinge of pink colour came into her cheeks, and her soft eyes looked up steadily at him.

"I'd shtop in Hurrish's house, let him hav dun what he wud," she said, resolutely.

Maurice started and stared open-mouthed and speechless. Such overt rebellion was the more astonishing from being so utterly unexpected. That every one else in the neighbourhood was fiercely opposed to the part he had taken against Hurrish, he was aware; but that *Alley* should also have espoused that side of the quarrel, had not even occurred to him. She was *his* property, not Hurrish's: what he did, she must think right; what he thought, she must think also; were they not all but man and wife? The case evidently called for severity.

He came a step nearer, and fixed his eyes upon her with an air of authority. She must be made to understand what she was risking by her rebellion.

"Attind to me, Alley, and mind what I'm saying, for I always keep to my word," he said, in a tone of impressive displeasure. "What I say I won't go back of again,—no, not for all the begging and the praying in the world. So sure as you stop in that there man's house one minute longer nor I give you leave, so sure everything will be at an end between you and me for good and all. I'd throw you off same as I would an old shoe, if you was to dare disobey me. You're not to listen to any one else at all, only to me. You're not to obey any one at

all, only me. You're to remember that you're to be my wife, and that if you ain't obedient, everything will be at an end between us, out and out. Mind that, for I always mean what I say, and more, too."

He expected an instant change. Tears, promises of absolute obedience, entreaties that if he would only forgive her, she would obey him in everything, —their courtship had been largely made up of that sort of thing. Nothing of the sort came, however. Alley stood still, trembling, it is true, and clenching her two hands tightly together, but when she spoke her voice was firm enough.

" Thin, maybe indade, Maurice, 't 'ud be bether so," she said softly.

He sprang back as if she had flung something at him. His expression changed. The air of calmness and authority fell off like a badly-fitting dress, and the natural passion of an undisciplined and under-civilised man came to the front. She defied him, did she? This girl, this puny creature, whom he had drifted into loving, he hardly knew how. She joined the rest of them—the curs! the cowards! who had turned against him,—she threw him off, she *dared* to do so! He stood and glared at her as a wild beast glares before it springs.

In Maurice Brady's despite, Alley, as it happened, was looking especially lovely that day. The innocent wild-flower face, with its great pathetic eyes, had that glow and soft transcendent flush which it seemed often, like the clouds, to catch from something external to itself—something which filled and irradiated it. Standing before him, with her two bare feet upon the grass, her soft face upraised in

piteous entreaty to his furious one—the misty glea[illegible] of sunlight falling upon her dark uncovered head, [illegible] poor red-petticoated Alley was a poet's dream, [illegible] very picture of an ideal purity and innocence c[illegible] fronted with dark and unknown dangers. N[illegible] Maurice, for his misfortune, was intensely s[illegible] ceptible. He had that keen relish for femin[illegible] loveliness which seems, for some reason, to be [illegible] rarely bestowed upon his class. He ground his te[illegible] savagely at the thought of her escaping him. Ne[illegible] before had he so realised her beauty; never be[illegible] had he realised how strongly his mind was set upon that beauty being his,—his very own,—his chattel, —his private personal property, like his dog or *his* cow. A hot furious jealousy of Hurrish—one which, despite their relationship, had often secretly smouldered before,—sprang up suddenly, as if at a touch, to full maturity. She loved him—he felt sure of it. She mightn't know it, probably did *not* know it, but it was the fact all the same. As long as their interests had gone together, she had been true to himself; now that they were severed she flung him off, without a word or a qualm. In a nature like Maurice Brady's, jealousy for a long time, perhaps for ever, may be kept at bay. Pride, an innate certainty of the superiority of his own claims to those of any other claimant whatsoever, prevents his succumbing to it. Let this supreme certainty, however, once be broken down, and the same pride which would have kept the idea of rivals far from his thoughts becomes a lash to drive him to distraction, a barb in the side of his anger. It was so now. His love, which had hitherto been a placid possession

enough,—a sort of small side rill, flowing half disregarded beside other and more serious currents,—suddenly became a consuming torrent, taken up into the main channel of those others, and outswelling them all. Rage, jealousy, desire,—three fierce devouring wolves,—all bore down upon him at once. He could have caught Alley to his arms, in her own despite, and strained her to his breast in jealous revenge and passion rather than love. He did not do so, however. The "cake of custom" is strong, happily, even over a man who considers himself to be superior to it; and purity is still, thank heaven, the distinctive note of the Irish peasant in such relations. Though custom and instinct restrained him in this particular, to be brutal in another way came unfortunately only too easily and too naturally to him.

He came close to her, his dark eyes gleaming savagely out of a face distorted with passion.

"D' you know what I've a mind to do, and what I'd do if I did what was right, Alley Sheehan?" he said, with the slow deliberation of concentrated fury. "I'd kill you this minute as you stand there, and leave you dead upon that grass at my feet. Why shouldn't I? What's to hinder me? You arn't *fit* to live. D'ye hear what I say—not *fit* to live. You're a wicked girl—a bad, heartless, wicked girl! A girl who goes back of her word isn't fit to live. Arn't you all one and the same thing as my wife, and a wife that turns against her husband is a disgrace to the earth, and will go to hell when she dies! Ask your priest else."

He paused a minute to gather breath, and then

went on, this time apostrophising rather than directly addressing her.

"A girl that no one else would ha' looked at! A girl without a shoe to her foot, or a penny to her fortun', or larning, or manners, or a thing! A girl that was nothing nor a drudge; living on charity—and what charity?—bits, and scraps, and dirty ends of things, that nobody else, not the pigs, would touch, and batings with that! And I that was ready to make her me wife, and a *lady*, and give her the best of eating, and drinking, and clothes, and everything. And what do I get? Nothing but ingratitude—black, wicked, heartless, grovelling ingratitude." (The last adjective was not perhaps precisely what he meant, but, like other orators, his stock of that commodity had its limits.) "She'd rather stick by Hurrish O'Brien, that's kept her in rags and misery, than be learned by me, and do as I bid her! If such a one doesn't deserve killing, there never was one in this wide world did yet. But"—and he put his face nearer to her, and ground the syllables slowly out one by one—"But I'll *not* kill you, Alley Sheehan, and I'll tell ye why. If I did, you couldn't bear witness against Hurrish O'Brien, and 'tis that you'll have to do next Tuesday three weeks. It's you'll be called first of all, and 'tis on *your* evidence they'll hang him—d'ye hear me? *hang* him. 'Taint no good your thinking you'll get him off with lying either, for that will only make them harder on him nor ever. If you'd been true to me, I'd have saved you all I could, and maybe not have told what you said to me down by the rocks yonder; but now I'll go straight to Ennis, and tell them that's there every word of it

—how you told me that Mat was dead, before any one else knew. And they'll know the reason why. That it was because you *knew* Hurrish had done it; and 'tis my belief you *seen* him do it, for you was always bitterest of all against Mat, that might have his faults, poor fellar, like another, but wasn't a murderer anyway, like Hurrish O'Brien!"

Poor Alley! She had sunk upon the grass, her lips apart, her face ghastly white and almost devoid of expression, as, with the stupefaction of utter misery, she gazed blankly at her tormentor. Maurice felt no pity, however. His own rhetoric had quickened and intensified the sense of his own wrongs, as the way of such rhetoric is. He felt *glad* she suffered—glad that her punishment had already begun. It was all true, every word that he had said to her. She *had* vowed to be his wife, and she had gone back of her word; and Hurrish *had* killed his brother, and it was his duty and his right to avenge him. He looked at her for a minute longer, then turned and walked deliberately away toward the narrow passage leading out of the glen.

Suddenly Alley's lips moved, and a sound came from them,—a single word repeated over and over again. "Maurice!" "Maurice!" "Maurice!" she cried, like one under the torture.

Involuntarily he paused, and looked back. A misty gleam was streaming through the narrow doorway of the little Teampull a Phoill, shining upon the golden lichen of its roofless walls—upon the tall gable ends, upon the well with its wall, and the tiny rippling stream. There was an indescribable look of appeal about the whole scene—that wistful yearning expres-

sion which such ascetic scenes sometimes assume—as it were a cry from man to God, from God to man, an appeal for peace, hope, mercy, for a tenderer and kindlier humanity. Alley kneeling there—her white face upraised in piteous entreaty—seemed to echo and intensify this appeal; the appeal which, at all ages of the world, and from innumerable lips, has gone forth wherever man—the erring, the feeble, the ignorant—affects to judge and to condemn his brother man.

"Maurice, for God's sake! For the sake ov th' holy crass beside ye, and the blissed Vargin that's over us all — be marciful!" she cried. "Sure ye wudn't do it, you couldn't, you'd niver have the heart? Is it Hurrish? Hurrish that was allays so good to you an' to me, an' to ivery wan that come nigh him. Think of thim poor little childer, Maurice! Wud ye lave them widout a dada to put bread in their mouths? And for *me* to be the wan to spake against him! to sware away his pricious life! whin ye know I'd raythor rin into the say fust an' be drownded—God forgiv me for sayin' such a thing! Till me ye didn't mane it, Maurice! Till me you wudn't go for to do such a thing! Sure, I know you've the good heart if ye'd only let yerself hear it spake. Don't we want to be gettin' marcy all of us, an' how 'ul we iver hope to get it if we don't show none fust?"

He had stood still, riveted, in spite of himself, by her look and words. They did not soften him, however; on the contrary, they made his desire for revenge burn deeper. She had turned against him! This soft, supplicating creature, who looked so gentle and yielding—whom he had regarded, and regarded

still, as his own—his thing, his creature, his property! It was because of *Hurrish's* danger, and for *Hurrish's* sake, that she was imploring him, not for any other reason. The last drop of venom seemed infused into the bitter current of his soul.

"I'll *not* have marcy," he said sullenly. "D'ye think I'm going to let him kill my brother and get off without anything?—go off and kill some one else most like! I hope to God he will be hanged, and I'd go any distance, if it was to the very end of this world, to see it done, so I would!"

Alley's eyes widened slowly with horror. Then the very extremity seemed to give her courage, for she got up from her knees and stood erect, trembling, but facing him.

"Then I'll not ask ye again, Maurice Brady," she said. "An' 'tis yersel' 'ul be the worse for it an' not Hurrish, for I don't believe God 'ul iver let him be killed, for *He's* merciful if you're not, an' He knows that Hurrish is not a bad man, whativer he may do when the timper's on him. An' I'm not afear'd for all ye say, for there's One I've put me trust on, that 'ul bring him out of this, spite ov the worst you can do."

She was not thinking of any earthly assistance, but he thought that she knew, as he himself in fact did know, that the chance of Hurrish being really condemned was, under the circumstances, a very remote one; and this, and the reproach of her words together, put the apex to his fury.

"He may get off at Ennis, then, for there's liars and vagabonds everywhere," he almost screamed; "but if he does, he'll not get off from *me*, and so you

may tell him! I'll hunt him down same as I would a mad dog! He needn't hope to escape me—not if he were to go and hide himself under the sea itself!" He was still standing beside the cross, and, with that strongly dramatic instinct that ran through his whole nature, he now turned deliberately towards it. "Sure as God made me, and sees me now, and seen him kill my brother Mat, so sure I swear, if he gets off at Ennis court-house, I'll do for him yet! Night or day, early or late, sooner or later, by God's help or the devil's help, *some* way or other, I'll do for him! There, I've *shworn* it!" and he struck his hand down violently upon the broken top of the cross.

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE COURT-HOUSE AT ENNIS.

All day long in the crowded court-house, in the dust, and the heat, and the glare. Faces everywhere. Cold, decorous, indifferent faces; faces framed in wigs; polite faces surmounted with well-brushed hair; faces rising serene above black broadcloth and white spotless linen. Behind and on either side faces, too, more faces, nothing but faces. Wild, unkempt, excited, perspiring faces these, packed close as cattle in a cattle-truck. A few familiar ones here and there. Old Phil Rooney, looking old and unnatural in his loose grey hair, without the inevitable battered high hat. Father Denahy, close at hand, broad, friendly,

and genial, a very sustaining point in the confusion. Hurrish, a long way off, pale and strange-looking, with a policeman on either side. Bridget, excited but awed, with a huge black shawl over her tousled hair. These were some of Alley Sheehan's experiences of Ennis court-house on the day of the trial of Hurrish O'Brien for the murder of Matthew Brady.

She had been put into the witness-box about one o'clock. Bridget, half mad with excitement, had flown at her like a vulture a little while before, and had hissed directions into her ears. She was to do this, not to do that; she was to say this, not to say the other. Alley, however, hardly heeded. She was very tired, and dazed with the crowd and unaccustomed surrounding, but she was wonderfully calm. The scene with Maurice had left upon her mind a sort of exaltation—a sense of inward support. Seen by herself, detached from the crowd around, her sweet young face, with its peculiarly nun-like look of innocence and purity, produced an immediate effect, and a slight murmur of admiration made itself heard.

She was asked how she had known that Matthew Brady was dead before any one else had done so, and had been made to describe coming upon his dead body in the glen, and running back to the cabin to tell Bridget. Then there was a few minutes' pause, and she began to wonder whether it could be all over. Every pair of eyes in the whole building was fixed upon her. For her own part, however, she saw no one distinctly—it was all a mist and a confusion. Then the counsel for the prosecution arose—a stout, burly man, the native humorousness of whose expres-

sion was only partially modified by a sense of his own importance.

"Now, my good girl, listen to me, and be very careful what you say. Who did you see in Gortnacoppin valley that morning besides the dead man?"

"Ne'r a one 't all, plaze, sor."

"Ne'r a one 't all? Now be careful. Think! On your oath, did you not see Hurrish O'Brien?"

"'Dade no, sor; I never seen a sight ov him."

"Where did you see him last that morning?"

"At the dure."

"What *dure?*"

"Th' house dure."

"What did he say to you?"

"Said he was goin' to Ballyvaughan, sor."

"Anything else?"

A blush flew over Alley's soft cheek, leaving it as pale as before.

"Said somewhat 'bout Maurice Brady," she murmured.

The last words were so low that no one in the court heard them except the counsel for the prosecution, who was nearest, and he only the last one.

"Said something about Brady, did he? Come now, my good girl, what was it?" he said, with an air of elation.

Alley did not blush again; she hesitated and looked unhappy.

"Come, come, my good girl,—no prevarication. Tell us what it was."

"Said he had a good hart, sor," she murmured.

The counsel's jaw dropped, and a laugh, beginning

amongst those in front, and spreading quickly to the crowd behind, ran round the whole court.

"*Said he had a good heart?*" he repeated, in a tone of mystification. "Nonsense, my good girl; don't be wasting the time of the court like that. He couldn't have said anything of the sort."

"He did indade, sor." Alley's great eyes were lifted for a moment to her interrogator's face, and their expression of limpid truthfulness it was difficult to gainsay.

"Nonsense, I tell you! Impossible! Why, we know that they were always enemies."

"Is it he an' Maurice? Sure Hurrish and Maurice was allays frinds, sor, allays—lastways till now," she added, with a sigh.

"Oh, Maurice! It was *Maurice* Brady he said had the good heart?"

"Yes, sor—Maurice."

"Oh, pooh, we're not here to make any inquiries about Maurice Brady's heart! Go on, and tell the court what else Hurrish O'Brien said to you that morning."

"Nothin' more, sor."

"Which way did he go when he left you?"

"Straight on over the racks, sor."

"Would that way take him through the Gortnacoppin valley?"

Alley hesitated again, trembled, cast a wild despairing look around for help, then, as no help was forthcoming, murmured piteously, "Yis, sor."

"Very well. Now, that second time when you came back with Bridget O'Brien, what happened then?"

This was really the perilous point. Fortunately for Hurrish, nothing at all had transpired about the stick. It had been sought for, but not until the next day, when it had been found in its usual place in the corner of the cabin, where old Bridget's instinct had told her to replace it. Any of the men who had seen him at Ballyvaughan could, of course, have sworn that he had been without it there; but then no one, equally of course, had chosen to do so.

Alley trembled. She, too, knew the peril well enough. She had not yet seen Maurice Brady, but she felt instinctively that his eyes were upon her as she spoke. Had she been subjected to a sufficiently severe cross-examination, it is almost certain that her innate truthfulness would have betrayed her, and that she would have revealed something. As it was, she had only to repeat what she had already said—namely, that she was frightened and afraid to look again at the dead man, and so ran away and hid herself amongst the rocks by the sea.

There were a few more questions, but nothing further of any consequence was elicited, and she was allowed to leave the witness-box and return to her former place.

Father Denahy received her, spoke encouragingly, and found a place for her beside himself in a corner where she was a little screened from the pressure of the crowd.

She hardly heard what Bridget, who was the next witness, said, though, from the shouts of laughter that ran round the court, it was evident that the old woman was affording that entertainment so dear to the hearts of *habitués* at Irish trials. Suddenly she

saw that Maurice Brady was in the witness-box, and lifted her head in terror, and tried to listen. She could not, however, distinguish very much. He looked excited and eager, and spoke rapidly with an air of authority and importance. Then another gentleman in a wig—not the one that had questioned her—got up, and it seemed to her that Maurice was annoyed by the questions he asked, for she could see his face flush and his brow darken angrily. A sullen murmur greeted him as he, too, stepped from the witness-box, but this demonstration was speedily put down. Then more witnesses, one after the other, appeared, popping up like puppets in a puppet-show, though whether they were speaking for Hurrish or against him Alley could not make out. She was very tired, worn out by the long drive in the early grey of the morning, and the long day in the hot and crowded court-house; worn out, too, by all that she had gone through beforehand. Her head nodded wearily, and at last fell back against the chair. Father Denahy had had to leave her, in order to go and give his evidence in favour of Hurrish's general character, which was also confirmed by Major O'Brien and by young Thomond, who had insisted upon being allowed to get into the witness-box. Of this Alley, however, heard little or nothing. She was not sleepy, but she had reached that point of weariness when everything becomes dream-like. It was perhaps only a horrible dream, she thought, that Hurrish was being tried for murder. His face she saw distinctly; all the rest was blurred, misty, undistinguishable.

At last the witnesses ceased popping up, and then one of the wigged gentlemen rose and began to speak

—"Buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz," his voice went on for hours—days as it seemed to Alley. At length, however, it came to an end, but immediately afterwards another got up and began a fresh "Buzz, buzz, buzz," all over again. At last this, too, ceased, and then there followed a long delay. She had been given a piece of bread, which she broke a bit off mechanically from time to time and put into her mouth. The court-house had now to a great extent become empty. The gentlemen with wigs had nearly all gone. Hurrish, too, had been taken away by the two policemen, and there was a great vacant place in front of her where the crowd had lately been. The jury were deliberating.

Alley did not leave. She remained where she was, for Father Denahy had decided that it was best so. The comparative coolness revived her, and she looked up at the window in front of her. Through the dirt and manifold cobwebs she could see a little bit of pale blue sky and a bird flying by. It seemed strange somehow that there should be birds and sky still outside. It made her think of Teampull a Phoill, and she tried to say a prayer, but could not for the life of her remember any. Bridget, wrapped in her big shawl, was rocking herself to and fro on a bench, muttering what sounded like curses between her teeth. Alley looked at her, and would have liked to say something to comfort her if possible, but was afraid —she looked so fierce and forbidding.

She was aroused by a fresh bustle around her,—a fresh tramp of hasty feet pouring into the court-house. The gentlemen in wigs were all coming hurrying in again. The judge had taken his place; Hurrish was

being hastily replaced in the dock. All eyes were fixed upon the door by which the jury were about to return.

At last it opened, and the twelve appeared. The foreman stepped forward. He opened his mouth to speak—a cough! Opened it again—a second cough. What a moment for a man to be affected with a catching in his breath! Opened it a third time; and now two words came out—"Not Guilty."

They were caught up by a hundred voices—hoarse, shrill, guttural, declamatory. A buzzing as of ten million imprisoned bees and wasps suddenly escaping from a bag, filled the building. Every frieze-coated man in or near the court-house shouted them at the top of his voice to his neighbour; every arm was waving excitedly; every coat-sleeve bursting at the shoulder —all Irish coats seem to have a tendency to give way at the arm-holes; every one was struggling madly to get out into the open air at once. Alley was helped to her feet by Father Denahy, who took her by the arm and almost carried her through the crowd, warding off any excited elbows which otherwise might have hurt her. Old Bridget was just in front, making her way by the aid of her own redoubtable fists and elbows. They were outside now, in the open air, so cold after the close and suffocating air of the court-house. Another minute and Hurrish himself appeared, escorted by a couple of constabulary.

At sight of him a roar, as of a whole drove of mad bulls suddenly broken loose, rose and mounted skyward. The entire crowd seemed to be convulsed. Big, broad-shouldered fellows were sobbing like infants, thumping one another violently for pure joy

cursing, shrieking, blaspheming—they did not in the least know why, but presumably for happiness. Old Bridget flung up her two wrinkled hands to heaven. Her attitude, however, was certainly not one of gratitude. She clenched her fists and shook them passionately, as if in triumph, at the sky, uttering shriek upon shriek as she did so, shrill and piercing as the whistle of an express train.

Alley was too scared and bewildered to join in all this excitement. She realised that Hurrish was safe, and so far was thankful, but she could not catch the contagion. He himself kept calm, too, amongst the commotion. The weight of the prison was perhaps on him still. He shook one or two of the hundred hands held out to him and thanked their owners, but looked around at the same time as if for a way of escape—"There, there, boys! aisy. Arrah, God bless yis all, aisy!"—his voice was heard from time to time above the tumult in a tone of expostulation.

The car which had brought them from Tubbamina was waiting in the market-place, but it was impossible to get to it. A rush was made by the crowd to seize Hurrish and chair him round the town—an honour which he only succeeded by main force in evading. In every direction hands were held up and hats waved. People who had never seen him in their lives before, and would not have cared two straws if he had been comfortably hanged and done for, were apparently convulsed with joy, pouring out countless blessings upon his head, and in the same breath cursing the Government and the "polis."

All at once, and in the very height of the excite-

ment, there came a new diversion—a fresh commotion. Alley did not know why all the people suddenly turned and ran back towards the court-house, or why faces that a minute before had been wet with emotion, suddenly grew hard and hideous with ferocity. Hurrish knew, however. Maurice Brady had waited some time behind to allow the tumult to subside, but was now coming out of the court-house, and there was a general rush to get at him.

He ran back, and, with the aid of Father Denahy and one or two others whom they persuaded, rather unwillingly, to help, got between the crowd and their object, so as to try if possible to turn this new tide of popular excitement. Old Bridget was amongst the first that rushed back,—not with this object, however,—her gleaming teeth and outstretched hands keen and hungry for revenge. Alley for the moment was left alone in the street. In front she saw a dense sea of people—shoving, pushing, screaming, elbowing; striking out madly with sticks, and fists, and feet. Wild, hardly, as it seemed to her, human faces, seen sideways, with cheeks expanded and mouths protruding; hands held up, clutched, brandished above the sea of heads; lumps of mud sent flying through the air, hissings, "booings"—a favourite weapon just then of offence—shrieks of women trodden on—the very houses seemed to her to rock and tremble with the tumult! Presently the crowd began to retreat backwards towards her. Alarmed, she retreated before them, and so they proceeded downhill towards the market-place. Suddenly, through a narrow lane opened through the

people, she saw Hurrish and Father Denahy waving their arms and expostulating, and above — upon a flight of steps raised half-a-dozen feet over the rest —she saw Maurice Brady, white as a sheet, but looking down, with arms disdainfully crossed, at the bristling array of sticks and fists shaken menacingly in his direction. Then a squad of constabulary pushed their way rapidly through the crowd, shoving the people right and left, and rapping the more troublesome over the head or knuckles. The gap widened; a flying tangle of men, women, and children came streaming down towards Alley. Frightened, she turned and ran before it, not knowing what to do or where she was going. Happily the market-place was wide enough to disperse the crowd, and she was able presently to find refuge in a small grocery shop, the proprietor of which allowed her to shelter herself, and here a quarter of an hour later she was found by Hurrish and Father Denahy, who came hurrying down in search of her.

Even now they were obliged to wait, as old Bridget was still missing. Father Denahy offered to go in search of her, leaving Hurrish with Alley. There was another half-hour's delay, and then the two appeared. Whatever antagonist the old woman had found to exercise her energies upon, it was evident that for once she had had her fill of fighting. Her hair was hanging about her in ragged wisps; one side of her face showed a long black bruise; one of her sleeves had been torn away, leaving the bony, stick-like arms bare. More serious dilapidation still, she had lost her black shawl, the hoarded treasure of years. She did not seem to heed it, however. Her

eyes shone with the gleeful triumph of the victor, and she reeled along the road as if she were drunk, though, as a matter of fact, she had tasted nothing.

They mounted the car, Hurrish and Alley on one side, old Bridget and the priest on the other. The affray between the people and the police had already almost effaced the previous excitement about Hurrish, so that they were able to get away without difficulty, and almost without notice. Just as they were leaving Ennis, old Phil Rooney ran up. He had come all the way to the trial in a donkey-cart, and was going back the same way, and did not expect to reach his own cabin till early the next morning. He was breathless with haste, and with the buffeting which he had encountered in the street, but his wrinkled old face beamed as he wrung Hurrish's hand, flourished his stick in the air, cut a wonderful caper in the dust—he had been a noted jig-dancer in his day—then ran back and clambered into his donkey-cart, settling himself again amongst the straw, his legs stretched out luxuriously before him, the poor patient beast setting off immediately, as if aware that it had twenty weary miles of up and down hill to traverse before it reached its mouldy straw.

It was with a sense of intense thankfulness that Alley found herself away from all the people, out in the open country amongst the dull green fields and monotonous lace-work walls. As they were passing the trout-stream close to the town, Hurrish lifted his head and looked eagerly away to the west, where the Burren hills were faintly discernible in grey unevenness against a pale saffron-coloured glow. Then he inflated his lungs suddenly with a breath which

seemed visibly to expand his frieze coat, and almost lift him bodily off the car!

Hardly a word was exchanged on the drive. At first Father Denahy's voice was heard in pastoral rebuke to the belligerent Bridget. Finding, probably, that he was only wasting breath upon that unprofitable subject, he soon subsided into silence. Once, when they were passing a chapel, Hurrish, who had instinctively lifted his hand to his hat, turned with a sudden impulse to his companion.

"Ye said a bit ov a pray-er for me now and again, Alley, did ye?" he inquired in a whisper.

"I did, Hurrish."

"I thought maybe y' had."

Then they relapsed into fresh silence.

After the sun had set clouds gathered thickly, and before they had done a third of the distance, the rain descended in a torrent, sending the dust flying before it in grey scuds along the road. Father Denahy unfurled a huge brown alpaca umbrella, and held it over himself and his companion. Hurrish looked at Alley with an expression of disquietude.

"What'll ye do 't all? Sure ye'll be drownded," he said, anxiously.

"Arrah, I'll do well!" She had nothing at all over her head, and only a thin old woollen shawl above her cotton bodice.

He took off his own greatcoat and put it cloak-fashion around her, keeping the flaps for himself. When they had got within about eight miles of Tubbamina, a miserable heap of small wet arms and legs were discovered upon the roadside, which presently unrolling itself, turned into the two small boys, Clancy

and Andy, who had run out all this way so as to be the first to hear the result of the trial. They were promptly picked up and put upon the well of the car, an elevation from which Andy soon slid down, and settled himself into a small pulpy bundle between his father and Alley. She let him wriggle till he had established himself comfortably against her shoulder, then spread out a piece of the capacious frieze coat and held it round him, so that he, too, might have a share of its shelter; and so, rolled in a bundle together, they proceeded.

When she next peeped out of her own private corner of the pent-house, Alley's heart gave a sudden bound. Though it was nearly pitch-dark, she could distinguish the wet grey limestone of the Burren. She could see the flat tombstone-like platforms stretching in all directions, with huge boulders rising here and there like headstones. Her eye followed delightedly the crooked contortions of a fissure, as it sprawled its ugly length through the rocks, like some fragment of sea-shore, which, not content with keeping its proper place, had stretched inland over the entire country. To a stranger, nothing could possibly have been more grimly unattractive; to Alley it was home, peace, shelter. No more repellent to her imagination than the native uncouthness of some kind familiar face it has known from babyhood is repellent to the imagination of a little child.

CHAPTER XXI.

SUNDAY IN THE BURREN.

The next day was Sunday. When Alley got up, nearly an hour later than usual, and went to the door, the rain had vanished in a pale blue mist. The sun was shining brilliantly. The great flagged surfaces shone steel-blue with reflection; the little pools of water upon their indented hollows were of a ruffled lapis-lazuli. Across the valley the chapel bell at Tubbamina was ringing for matins, and the sound came faintly to her ear. The sea was smooth, or seemed at this distance to be so. Three "pookhauns," their small red-brown sails set to the fullest possible extent, drifted leisurely past the headland; the grotesque prow of a coracle, lifted high out of the water, showing black as ink against the luminous satin-like surface.

Hurrish and the two boys had gone off to fish, but old Bridget still lay fast asleep in her private lair, the sound of her sonorous snoring filling the cabin. Alley half dressed little Katty, and, leaving her in the inner room, went into the kitchen to see about preparing for breakfast. Hurrish had lit the fire, and put the pot on to boil, before going out. Accordingly, she went to the sack of oatmeal, filled a quart can with it, stirred it into the water, then returned and repeated the operation, singing softly to herself as she did so.

Bridget, whose snores had been growing more and

more apoplectic, awoke suddenly with a final snort, and sat up and gazed round her, with the lowering air of some carnivorous animal unexpectedly awakened. Then, fetching down a comb from some obscure recess, she made a clutch at a bundle of clothes, and began making her toilette where she was, her skinny arms, bare to the shoulder, moving backwards and forwards actively as she did so.

Alley's singing had stopped instantly. Her terror of her tormentor was chronic, and never ceased entirely: she always had a feeling that Bridget might suddenly launch some unexpected missile at her—an incident not by any means, indeed, of unfrequent occurrence. Little Katty—her small garments still in a state of wild disorganisation—ran in from the other room and up to her, turning round to have some strings and buttons arranged. Alley knelt down on the floor to do so, thus bringing her face on a level with the child's. She was about to get up, her task finished, when Miss Katty—not a young lady generally prodigal of caresses—flung herself suddenly upon her, hanging on to her neck like a round ripe plum, and rubbing her little warm red cheeks, as a kitten does, up and down the girl's pale satiny ones.

Old Bridget, with a scowl, lifted her vulture-like face, and glared savagely at the pair. She was about to growl out something, when the doorway darkened and Hurrish appeared, the two small boys trotting briskly in his wake.

Breakfast that morning was quite a festivity! Hurrish had a string of fishes in his hands, which he proceeded to clean and prepare for broiling, tak-

pected that she had come to realise the matter pretty nearly as it really stood, and therefore rested in that belief. To himself the whole subject was full of quite unfamiliar pain, and with the indestructible light-heartedness of his race and type, he made haste therefore to throw it as far behind him as possible. The hardest thing thus to fling away and get rid of was the remembrance of Maurice Brady's share. Even this, however, after a while, he succeeded in doing. Either Maurice had felt it his duty, in some inexplicable way, to do what he had done, or he had been led away by temper, and for both alternatives Hurrish could feel a brotherly sympathy. They had now each something to forgive the other—there was a satisfaction in remembering that—and he cherished a hope that some day the two offences might, as it were, balance one another, and all be again as it had been before.

The scene at Tubbamina, as he came down to the chapel, with Alley and the two boys beside him, was in the style of his reception outside the court-house the day before;—the numbers, that is to say, were smaller, but the enthusiasm even greater. Sal Connor—whom it is to be hoped the reader has not forgotten—was one of the first to rush forward and pour out tears and exultations over his escape. Despite a succession of other swains who in the interim had laid siege to her hand—despite even his own hardened ingratitude—Hurrish still retained the foremost place in that unresenting damsel's affections. She had been one of the most furious against Maurice Brady,—indeed it was well for him that they had not chanced to meet, otherwise he would have

stood a considerable chance of having to defend himself against her own maidenly hands. She had a new suitor now in attendance—a young gentleman from Limerick, engaged in the bacon trade—but it was evident to all intelligent beholders that it only wanted a word from Hurrish for that youth's chances to vanish utterly. A man just out of jail! Other merits apart, what patriotic maiden's heart could hope to withstand so irresistible a plea?

It was a long, long day of absolute idleness—*free* idleness!—delicious combination of words! Hurrish took Lep, and went off to the saleen, throwing himself down upon the sands there in an ecstasy which he would have been ashamed perhaps to exhibit before any more critical audience. Lep was sympathetic, however, and paid no particular attention, beyond wagging his tail and snapping sleepily at the flies. He had exhausted himself in enthusiasm the night before, and felt perhaps that it behoved him to regain a soberer and a less expansive deportment.

There was something luminous—almost, as it were, Biblical—about the scene to-day. The grey limestone hills, warm and faintly iridescent under the hot kisses of the afternoon sun, might have reminded a traveller of those other limestone hills, more memorable, for all their aridity, than the most favoured tracts of other lands. Hurrish naturally did not think of this, but a suffused sense of wellbeing filled his soul, and by an association of ideas he looked across the sea to that point—a little south of the Aran isles—where the last well-authenticated sight of the O'Brasil is said to have been obtained. It was a position better laid down in the mental charts of

the neighbourhood than half the genuine islands and sandbanks. Hurrish himself was troubled with no doubts at all as to its existence. To have been so would have been to show himself, in fact, no better than an atheist, seeing that, as lately as the time of Phil Rooney's grandfather, a young man, blown out to sea during a squall, had landed there, and been sumptuously entertained for three days by the inhabitants, who feasted him upon such rich viands as only the Blessed eat, and imparted to him, on leaving, many valuable secrets—"by which means," says a contemporary chronicler, "some seven or eight years after, he began to practise both chirurgery and phisick, and so continues ever since to practise, tho' he never studyed nor practised either all his life before, as we that knew him from a boy can averr."

It was not till the shadows, thrown backward from the sea, were beginning to grow long and straggling, that he got up and began to retrace his steps, Lep following close at heels, as if in dread of his again disappearing mysteriously into space. When they had got within a quarter of a mile of home, Alley was discovered sitting upon the rocks, with little Katty beside her; Clancy and Andy tumbling about together, like a pair of young bears; the poor old donkey, who took Bridget to market and Hurrish's fish to Lisdoonvarna, also rolling comfortably upon a bit of green turf hard by, its four well-worn legs high in air, like some unusually dilapidated variety of bedposts.

Alley was trying to teach the child to repeat her "Hails," whereas Miss Katty much preferred plucking the young leaves of sorrel which sprouted out of

the clefts of the rocks, and nibbling them with her small front teeth, making wry faces expressive of delighted disgust at their tartness as she did so. Hurrish stopped and sat down beside them, Lep moving a little way off, with rather a supercilious air. The colour rose to Alley's cheeks, as it had done each time the last two days Hurrish had come near her. It was the pleasure of seeing him free and safe again, she told herself; what else, in fact, could it have been? Certainly the character of *his* affection for her had sustained no change! The bare idea of being fond of her, in any other sense from that in which he was also "fond" of his own three-year-old Katty, had never dawned upon him, nor would probably have dawned upon him had they lived for a hundred years together. It would have been wrong, but, apart from that, it was not a direction in which his thoughts strayed, or had any temptation to stray. Why, he would have asked, should they do so?

Why indeed? There seems no answer one way or other, save the perhaps rather feeble and unsatisfactory one of national peculiarities. Despite his susceptibleness in other directions, it really did seem as if Hurrish, like so many of his type, hardly knew whether a woman was handsome or the reverse. To be strong and active, to have a "clane skin,"—these he recognised as important points, but beyond these his perceptions rarely strayed. He had never dreamt of being "in love" with his own poor Molly Sheehan, though they had been the happiest of couples, and he had mourned her loss with a passion which would have left many a susceptible gentleman far behind. Perhaps it is as well. If that delusive

Will-of-the-wisp, which makes wise men foolish and sober ones mad, were to exercise an equal ascendancy over such pieces of touch-paper as our friend Hurrish, —if he and such as he were to be as excitable in this direction as they are in some others—politics, to wit, —surely not all the rain that ever fell upon Ireland would keep that unlucky island from being in a state of perpetual conflagration!

It was a happy moment, but it came to an end only too soon. The evening was closing in, the sun sinking like a red-hot cannon-ball into the grey, cool breast of the Atlantic. After a while, therefore, they got up, and proceeded homewards, Hurrish and Alley abreast, each holding a fat hand of Miss Katty's in theirs; then Lep, sniffing the air, and passing the still recumbent donkey with an air of superiority; the boys—scuffling and running after one another—bringing up the rear. The western sky was clear, and almost colourless, but upon the other side, beyond the intervening Burren hills, it was a mass of finely graduated colour. A multitude of arrowy flames, like the *disjecta* of some aerial volcano, were shooting their fiery points, one after the other, in a continuous flight across the zenith. They had attracted apparently even old Bridget's attention, for she was standing at the cabin door as the others approached, and looking up at the sky, an expression of fierce exultation lighting up her wrinkled face, which seemed to be inspired by some more exciting idea than the mere contemplation of its beauty. "Red as the divil! red as the divil!" they heard her mutter to herself, as her eyes followed the blazing masses.

Hurrish nudged Alley's elbow. "'Tis the gran'

fightin' she got yisterday she's thinkin' ov," he said, with a wink.

Alley tried to smile, but she felt a sudden shock, and her innocent pleasure fell dead. The old woman's look and manner frightened her. More, it gave her a vague sense of impending trouble — a sense of something about to happen of which others knew, though she did not. The serenity which, half an hour before, had fallen upon her like a benediction, vanished, and a cold fear took its place. She thought of Maurice Brady, and of his words and looks that dreadful day at Teampull a Phoill. Did he, could he have meant what he said then? she wondered, or was it only a cruel threat,—a way he had taken of punishing her? She had never found courage to repeat his words, chiefly from a childish feeling that the mere fact of doing so might somehow tend to bring them to pass. She thought of them constantly, however, and always with fresh fear, always with a vivid recollection of his look and manner, which made it difficult to dismiss them as mere idle threats. They lay like a dead weight upon her mind—a weight which every sudden movement caused to press and hurt intolerably. Thus, though Hurrish was safe and out of prison again, the future was not by any means wholly free from clouds.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FLASH IN THE DARK.

Two months had gone by since the day of the trial. Other and equally exciting scenes had occurred in the interval, so that it was no longer a matter of much interest even on the spot. It was a bad moment, in a bad year. Though the long nights had not yet come, there was a dangerous spirit abroad. The harvest had in many parts been bad, and a considerable harvest of another sort had been reaped from its failure. All over Ireland there had been scattered crimes, and rumours of coming outbreaks. In lonely cabins, far from roads, far from the possibility of help of any kind, frightened women were lying awake at night, trembling to see the ill-protected door fly open, and blackened faces appear to drag away son, husband, father, to ill-usage, perhaps to death. On the hills around horns were sounding at the dead hours. The cries of tortured animals — not less audible, perhaps, there for being inarticulate — had again and again risen for vengeance to the sky. The whole country was in one of its periodic fits of excitement, terror, revolt. Vague expectations were everywhere afloat, dreadful or hopeful according to the anticipations of the individual. In the more reckless and desperate spirits, a wild belief in the speedy oncoming of some glorious pandemonium, when the torch and carnage would stalk over the country; in the more passive, a vague unquenchable

expectation of a millennium which would make them rich, happy, prosperous, as by a miracle. In more practical heads, an eager political ferment,—a feeling that old things had passed away, and all things had become new. Brave men were nervous; sober men excited; every one uneasy, uncomfortable, restless. Nowhere stability; nowhere confidence; everywhere a feeling that ordinary routine was henceforward set aside. Of what use, it was asked, to slave one's self when one might at any moment become rich without doing so? Still more forcibly, who but a fool would "dishtroy" himself working to pay the rent, when all the world knew that henceforth no rents would have to be paid at all?

Clare has always claimed a prominent position in times of disturbance, and it was not behind its old fame on this occasion. Several barns had been burned, several obnoxious individuals waylaid and chastised, and there were warnings of more vigorous doings still. In no other part of Ireland had Captain Moonlight appeared in greater force or with more absolute impunity. An impalpable reign of terror—invisible, but none the less real—lay upon every one, and every man looked distrustfully at his neighbour.

Mr O'Brien had his full share of these troubles. No rent had been paid, of course; but that was merely a preliminary. Threatening letters had again begun to form an ordinary item of the morning's post-bag. The momentary popularity which he had won by his defence of Hurrish had flickered and died. That, it was felt, was after all only an isolated case, whereas his misdeeds were perennial and unintermittent: he asked for rent; he professed his de-

termination to have it; he declared that he could not exist without it. Brave indeed would be the man that defended him!

Young Thomond was still at Donore, and was the hardest to convince that anything was seriously amiss with the state of the country. One evening, however, even his confidence got rather a shock. He had been pooh-poohing the alarms of the newspapers, declaring the Government and its myrmidons to be at the bottom of half the crimes reported. When night came, and his uncle had retired to bed, the whim took him to go for a midnight walk. It was a beautiful evening, warm and soft, with a moon sleeping peacefully over the sea, the whole world seemingly at peace and at rest. He turned away from the Burren, across the wider fields of the southern part of the property. As he was sauntering along, not far from the edge of a lane, his hands in his pockets, and his thoughts nowhere in particular, his attention was arrested by a mutter of tongues proceeding apparently from the ground below him. Startled, he approached, and stepping quietly up to the edge of a bank which skirted the lane, peeped cautiously over. Four men were crouched together under the opposite bank, which rose steeply above their heads. Two were lying at full length, the others squatting,—all with weapons—they might have been sticks, or they might have been blunderbusses—in their hands. Young Thomond held his breath, for he was aware that he had stumbled upon perilous ground, and that an incautious breath now would probably be his last. Presently up rushed a big sinister-looking man, exceedingly ragged, two wild bloodshot eyes

looking out under the tattered remnants of an old felt hat. The men in the ditch sprang up to hear what he had to say. Thomond listened too, but was unable to catch anything. The ragged man never ceased speaking, but he was hardly articulate, the gurgling syllables dying away half uttered in his throat, and never getting any higher. After a while all five crept stealthily away along the bottom of the ditch, their weapons protruding like stiff tails under their coats. Master O'Brien waited till they had all gone, and then went home considerably sobered, and was observed to be much less loud about the pacific proclivities of the county Clare for some days afterwards.

Alone amongst the Donore tenants, Hurrish still maintained friendly relations with Mr O'Brien. This, which under other circumstances would have been a source of no slight peril to himself, was in his case allowed. There was a feeling that he had done his part, and might be allowed to rest upon his laurels—a theory which, it may be said, entirely chimed in with his own views.

Of Maurice Brady nothing had been heard for some time. There was a rumour afloat that he had been engaged in more than one local misdeed—by way, perhaps, of wiping out the recollection of his late falling away from the popular ideal—but no proof of the fact had been forthcoming.

Meanwhile, in the Burren at any rate, the potato harvest promised to be excellent, and the corn—where there was any—had ripened as it had not ripened for years. It had been extraordinarily still for nearly a week, the whole coast seeming to be

wrapped in deep dreamless sleep. The sea heaved, but its surface was hardly broken, the great rollers flinging themselves down as if exhausted when they reached the shore, and passing away immediately into stillness. The very gulls and kittiwakes seemed to have temporarily changed their character, and floated inertly about, like so many farmyard ducks, upon the surface. The smoke of passing steamers trailed behind in a long-drawn lazy column. Now and then a catspaw would pass over the bay, beginning at the furthermost point of Iar Connaught, turning the pale satiny greyness of the surface into a deeper tint, and then vanishing suddenly. Down at the rock-pools, however, which were protected against such incursions, the very stillness of death prevailed, the particles of water seeming to be literally glued together. Through this oily tenacious surface the inquiring claw of some predatory crab, prowling amongst the seaweed, might have been seen now and then to rise, gesticulating excitedly, like the hand of some one in the act of drowning, or those supplicating hands seen by Dante above the lake of pitch; then the broken surface would settle together again, and all would be stillness. On the fifth day, however, this unnatural calm gave way. Noises sounded in the air. Dark masses of cloud rolled over the sky, and vivid weather-galls—green, violet, and orange—appeared in two or three directions. It was plain to every one who knew anything that dirty weather was coming.

Hurrish had left his coracle as usual on the small crescent-shaped strip of sand at the end of his own saleen. It was safe enough there in ordinary occasions, but in very big storms the whole of this space

was covered with foaming monsters, rolling in through the narrow mouth, and rushing with fury against the cliff. The tide, however, was out now, so that there would be time enough for him to see about it before it returned. In the meantime, as the day drew in, and the suspicious symptoms increased, every effort was being made to save the little crop of oats, which had been begun to be cut the day before in the small triangular field nearest to the cabin. The whole family were out together, — the two boys, Alley, and old Bridget collecting the bundles, while Hurrish, and another man got in to help, laboured away with their sickles. They were all intent upon their work, when a sudden exclamation from one of the boys caused them to look up. A solid-looking wall of lead-coloured cloud, with a thin, wicked-looking splinter of white light where the base touched the water, was stalking steadily in towards them over the face of the sea. Two of the Aran isles were already caught and swallowed up, while the third was just beginning to be engulfed in the maw of the monster. The Connemara mountains, which had been extraordinarily clear all that morning, had wholly disappeared, and the dark mass was now laying hold of the nearer headlands — Roundstone with its ragged retinue of islands, and the nearer Cashla: clearly before another ten minutes were past it would be upon them. They could see distinctly the jet-black layers of rain streaking the dun-coloured mass, a looser outlier of cloud sweeping away south like an advanced guard,—the sails of two or three "pookhauns," which had been all but becalmed an hour before, standing out like small

triangles of burnished gold against this sinister background.

The whole party loaded themselves to their utmost possible powers, and hurried to the cabin with their burdens—Hurrish and the other man speedily returning and setting to work desperately to cut down the corner of upstanding oats that still remained. By the time the rest were back, the storm, though still at bay, was creeping nearer and nearer. It was intensely hot. The perspiration poured down every face. The sun, shooting suddenly from behind a pair of round-backed clouds, blazed furiously as if excited upon the little field in its iron setting of rocks, then suddenly vanished, and was seen no more, and a hollow roll of thunder followed in a slow prolonged rumbling from the west.

By dint of desperate labour they got the work accomplished, though before the last arm-load was in, the rain had begun—huge single drops falling with a dull thud upon the dried-up surfaces of the rocks, and raising a round white puff of dust at every descent. It had got very dark, too, though it was not yet sunset.

Having packed the oats into a compact heap in the outhouse, Hurrish pulled on an old tarpaulin cape, kept for such occasions, tied his hat tightly round his head with a piece of string, and set off for the saleen. The moment he had gone, old Bridget called Alley and ordered her peremptorily to go and drive in the milch cow, which was tethered some distance away. She obeyed, though the rain was now coming faster, and she had no tarpaulin to put on—only her poor little thin woollen shawl, which ten

vent, a corner of which still retained a fragment of its original roof, consisting of small flat pieces of stone overlapping one beyond the other, and supported by the two end walls.

It was nearly quite dark here, for the storm had made havoc of the remaining daylight. Alley, however, knew her way as well as if it had been her own house, and could tell precisely the position of each of the stones, which lay in tumbled heaps over the ground. She found a dry spot at the very end, the farthest from the entrance, and sat down on a sort of ridge, tucking her feet under her, and shivering; the wind rushing in after her, and tearing round and round the little enclosure; the rain spreading out like a grey lattice-work over the edge of the fragment of roof, the stones of which projected in an irregular tooth-like outline one before the other over her head.

She hoped that it would leave off soon, and that she would be able then to return and fetch home the cow, which even Bridget could hardly expect her to bring through such a tempest. There was no symptom, however, of any cessation. The darkness deepened, but the rain only seemed to be growing heavier, and the wind to be steadily rising. Now and then a jagged flash of lightning lit up the gloomy little scene, finding its way to every corner of the ruin, playing bo-peep in and out of the black window-sockets, and making a luminous background to the tall gable-end, which rose in a peak over the doorway opposite.

Alley was not afraid, however, for the scene was too familiar, and even the lightning could not make it seem strange or formidable. She gathered her poor little cold body as comfortably as she could into

a corner, laid her head against the wall, and waited patiently until she could effect her escape.

She had been there perhaps half an hour, when a sound reached her that did, however, alarm her—a sound of some one moving about in the space outside. She sat up, then went a few steps forward, and peered eagerly into the darkness. She could see nothing, however, for the two walls on this side made the obscurity absolutely complete. She returned, therefore, to her former place, and remained there still as death, her heart beating, her eyes growing round with terror. Some one certainly *was* there, a man apparently, for she could hear his boots striking against the stones. Steps too were approaching, not hurrying wildly into shelter though, as might have been expected on such a night, but groping their way slowly and cautiously. She could hear them coming round the outside of the building where she was, and presently they paused, and a figure stopped short at the doorway opposite.

It was densely overgrown with ivy, which hung so low that a man would have had to stoop considerably in order to enter. Alley could distinctly perceive a dark outline against the greyness, but too vaguely to distinguish any traits. The unknown is always the terrible, and she held her breath, hoping, praying, that whoever he was, he might not come in. He did not do so, but passed on after a moment towards the west building, which was that of Teampull a Phoill. There was a small window in her wall upon this side, and peeping through it, she could now distinctly see the figure of a man, and see, moreover, that he was holding something in his hands

which he seemed to be trying to shelter from the rain. More than this she could not distinguish.

Another moment, and he would have been out of sight. She could see the black silhouetted outline making its way over the soaked grass, and getting gradually merged in the more comprehensive blackness of the ruin. At that instant, as fate would have it, another flash of lightning,—the most vivid there had yet been,—flung its melodramatic illumination over the whole scene. It gleamed upon the little ruin, throwing its low cyclopean walls, black hollows, and tall gable-ends into full relief. It shone upon the wet grass, swept flat with the beating of the rain; upon the well with its low wall; upon the encompassing rocks; upon the stream flowing in a thick brown torrent down the middle of the little valley. It lit up the figure upon the point of retreating into the church, and as it did so, threw a momentary but unhesitating illumination right into Alley Sheehan's soul. The man skulking there before her was Maurice Brady, and the thing which he was sheltering under his arm was a gun!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WRONG SALEEN.

A stifled cry broke from her lips. She silenced it instantly, however. Her strongest, most instinctive impulse, was to avoid drawing Maurice Brady's atten-

tion to herself—not to let him know that she was there, and that she had seen him. But what had brought him? she asked herself in terror; what was he doing there? Above all, what was the meaning of that gun?

A sort of wave seemed to roll over her brain, and then to roll back again, and a flash, vivid as the flash of lightning, to carry conviction to her mind. It meant danger to Hurrish—that and nothing else was what it meant. Maurice Brady had sworn to kill him—sworn it upon that very spot where they were standing—and now he was going to do it. The conviction rose clear as a revelation, and with it a corresponding determination to save Hurrish. She did not say to herself that duty required her to do so, but her whole heart flew out to him in agonised terror and in horror against the other. To get to Hurrish—only to get to him—to get him, if possible, into some place where he would be safe, and then to give notice to the police; to have Maurice seized, put somewhere, locked up—no matter how or where—so that he could not injure Hurrish;—these were the thoughts which flew, not coherently, but as it were panoramically, through her brain.

How to get away without being heard was the first question. She no longer thought of the rain—hardly knew, in fact, whether it rained or not. To get to Hurrish was her one thought, her one instinct. Cautiously she got up, and cautiously crept round the wall of the little refectory, feeling her way along its stones to the entrance. Fortunately, with her bare feet, she could move almost unheard; the wind, too, favoured her, and prevented any slight noise from

being audible. She crept down to the doorway and peeped out. The fear of such another tell-tale flash as had unveiled Maurice Brady's presence was strong before her mind, and made her keep close under cover. She could see the confused dark mass of the church opposite. His figure she could no longer, of course, see, as he had gone inside. There was a window, though, in the wall, which told her that it would not be safe to attempt to escape upon that side. Were she to do so, and his eye to turn to the window at the moment she was passing, the chances were, she felt, that he would catch sight of her.

That being so, the only alternative lay between getting out of the small window in the wall farthest from Teampull a Phoill, or else clambering over a piece of the same wall which had got broken down, and part of which lay on the ground in a pile of stones. She chose the latter, for the window was exceedingly small—so small that she feared that it might be impossible for her to get through it, at any rate without making a noise. There was a long slope of heaped-up stones upon either side, and a small piece of still solid wall rising out of the centre of this heap, the upper part being utterly destroyed. Feeling her way first cautiously with her hands, she mounted upon the wet pile, her bare feet giving her a firmer foothold than she would otherwise have had. Fortunately the stones had fallen years before, so that weeds had begun to bind them together. Even so, it was a difficult operation, particularly in the darkness, and against the tremendous hurly-burly of wind and rain which assailed her the instant she got

her head above the breach. The first time she tried to clamber up the solid piece of wall, her foot slipped upon the slimy stones, and she fell, hurting herself considerably. She mounted again, however, immediately, and this time, by a great effort, managed to get her chest over the edge of the wall; then, to bring her knees on a level with it. A minute after she was standing upon the top.

As she did so, another, though this time a fainter flash lit up the glen, and, to her terror, she saw that the window in her own ruin exactly faced the one in the ruin opposite, so that had Maurice Brady happened to be looking out, her outline would have been distinctly visible. In alarm she crouched down and waited while the dazzling flash faded, and the rapidly succeeding rumble of thunder also died away, and was lost in the distance. In the momentary lull that followed, she could feel her heart beating like a frightened rabbit's, expecting every moment to hear Maurice's voice, or his steps upon the stones below. After a while, however, as everything remained perfectly quiet, she concluded that she had not been seen, so prepared to get down upon the other side. The drop was very much deeper here—so deep that she could not catch a glimpse from where she was of the bottom. It might have been ten feet or it might have been ten thousand, for anything she could see.

A fresh terror seized her, and she half made up her mind to go back. The thought of Hurrish nerved her, however, and facing towards the wall, she resolutely leaned her chest and shoulders upon it, and let her feet drop out into the vacancy, stretching

them lower and lower in hopes of touching the stones below. In vain. There was nothing except the wall itself, and in that not a single chink into which she could hook her feet: the old monks' work was too good, and still after all these years presented an almost absolutely unbroken surface to the elements. What she would have done had she been left to herself it is difficult to say, but at that moment the wind took the matter into its own rough hands. A compact gust,—the most violent that had yet come, —came tearing down the glen, whisking everything portable away before it, and shaking the very stones themselves in their sockets. It tore away poor little Alley's feeble grasp from the top of the wall to which she had been clinging, causing her to fall helplessly on to the stones below, which, giving way under her feet, rolled away with her to the very bottom.

She lay for some moments upon the ground, stunned, and believing herself to be mortally injured. The sudden violence of the gust, and her own fall, made it seem more like some deliberate personal attack than the mere unheeding brutality of the storm. After a while, however, she gathered herself slowly up, the tears pouring from her eyes from pain. She was dreadfully bruised, and her poor little feet were badly cut by the stones, but there was nothing actually broken. A strong man falling in that way, and from such a height, would probably have received much more serious injuries, but she was so light that she had escaped comparatively easily.

As soon as she had realised that she was only scratched and bruised, her courage began to come back. Though she could not help crying with the

pain of her bruises, she struggled to her feet, and, forgetting the poor little shawl which had been torn from her by the gust, staggered up the track which she was close to now, and which led out of the glen on to the level rocks above.

She had to sit down again here under the shelter of a loose boulder to recover herself, for the force of the gale was so terrific, that she was afraid of being again knocked down. Her task was not yet quarter accomplished. Hurrish was still at the saleen. In order to see him, it would be necessary, therefore, for her to make her way across the rocks and down the cliff—a task which might well scare any one in the dark, and in the midst of such a storm as was then raging.

Like a good many other apparently feeble people, Alley, however, possessed a wonderful amount of passive courage. Pain and discomfort, too, were no strangers to her,—an amount of either which would have utterly deterred and paralysed one of a tenderer rearing, hardly counting at all. There was no time to lose, either. If she was to warn Hurrish, she must do it at once. She must get him to come back with her to the cabin. Otherwise, the worst might happen before he received any warning at all.

Suddenly she fancied that she heard a sound in the glen behind her. Perhaps Maurice Brady might be following her—might get to Hurrish before she did! That thought gave her courage, and leaving the shelter of the boulder, she struck boldly out across the naked rocks in the direction of the sea.

The wind was simply terrific; there was no other word for it! It seemed to meet her like a solid

wall, driving everything before it as with a mighty besom. Over the naked, slightly inclined surfaces—flat to the eye—the water raced as over the beds of a mountain torrent, driven in sheets by the wind. They felt like ice under her naked feet, those cold, rain-washed rocks, sculptured along the edges in long narrow grooves and channels, like the half-melted edges of crevasses. Here and there compact masses of hawthorn, welded together by many a previous tempest, presented their dwarf strength successfully to the blast. Everything else was blown flat, or swept bodily away. A number of sheep and lambs, huddled close together for protection under the edge of a lace-work wall, were bleating piteously, and could evidently barely keep their footing.

Alley faced it bravely,—her head down nearly to her chest; the solid sheets of wind-driven rain falling upon her bare head and neck, as if shot there through some directing shoot. The wind seemed to meet her with determined animosity, as though it knew of her errand, and was resolved to prevent her from carrying it out. The blind monster set itself against her puny girlish strength with the brute determination of a bully. It seemed as if the gusts were no longer intermittent but continuous. She began to grow ill with the pain of her bruises, with the fatigue of the battle, with the eternal roar and whistle in her ears, with the sense of opposing ferocity, with the dreadful loneliness of this solitary unaided tussle. Through it all, however, the thought of Hurrish drove her on. It was like a burning fire in her breast, and kept everything else at bay.

Long ago she was soaked to the skin, and had her

skirt been of cotton, like her bodice, she could hardly have continued the struggle. Happily it was solid as a frieze coat, or a Highlander's kilt; and though, wet as it was, it pressed heavily round her waist, its weight prevented it from flapping. Her worst enemy was her own hair, which had got loose, and at every fresh gust struck her across the face with a blow which smarted like whipcord.

At last she reached the brink, made clear by the sudden rise of ground, and by the jagged broken edges of the rocks. She could see a slight yellowish lighting around the horizon, and could feel, rather than see, the great watery immensity below. But where was the path? Where was the saleen? Where were Hurrish and the boat? It was all a mist and a void, indistinguishable as waves, or surf, or rain, or sea, or sky, or shore—a wild hideous chaos—as it were a gigantic yawn, in which the very earth itself seemed in the act of being bodily swallowed up.

Creeping cautiously along, almost upon her hands and knees, feeling her way round every rock, blown back continually by the wind, and almost stunned by the roar, she followed the edge, searching everywhere for the path. After nearly an hour thus spent, she, to her intense joy, hit upon it, and began to descend. It seemed very blind, and more impeded with rocks than she had thought; but this, in the confusion of the tumult, seemed only natural. Arrived at the bottom, she peered anxiously round her in the darkness. It was impossible to see more than a few yards at a time, so after a while she began to call out, at first feebly, fearing others might hear, then louder and

louder, as despair began to gain upon her. There was not the faintest response! Only the roar of the wind; only the sough of the rain, joined now by the louder and more battering noises of the waves as they flung themselves in fury against the rocks, exploring fiercely every corner of the space in front. She could distinguish their white teeth at the edge of the sand, and the long, sinuous, snake-like curves running towards her, like some sort of sea-dragons or slimy primeval monsters, thirsting to devour. Otherwise everything was as dark, or nearly as dark, as in a room of which the shutters are closed. Suddenly, groping about the sand, she stumbled over a rock sticking up in the middle—a peculiarly shaped rock, with two pinnacles like church steeples, divided by a gaping fissure. It seemed unfamiliar, somehow. She could not remember any rock like that in Hurrish's saleen. A terrible thought struck her, and she looked agonisingly round, and up at the cliff over her head. Peering intently into the darkness, she was able to make out the square top of something like a tower defined against the sky, with a lower, heavier mass below. The dreadful truth burst upon her in all its reality. It was *not* Hurrish's saleen, but another! In the confusion of her search she must have wandered farther than she had known, and made her way down another track, which she remembered to have once descended before, and which led from an old and now uninhabited castle belonging to the Macmorroughs. It was all over then! She would never be in time to warn him! Her struggles, her suffering were all for nothing! The disappointment, the blank despair, coming at the end of all her previous fatigues, struck

down upon the feeble remains of her strength like a crowbar. And, with a cry, lost in the roar and shriek of the storm, poor Alley sank upon the ground, utterly incapable of moving another step.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HURRISH SEES THE DEATH SPER'RT.

Meanwhile Hurrish had had his hands full. When he first reached the saleen the tide was still going out, and the sea had not even begun to rise, the smooth rollers, deflected by the outjutting horns of the bay, reaching the sand in the most innocent of waves, the long rhythmic sweep racing round and round the little bay, carrying their low white crests in a sort of skating curve along the sand, and rushing in mere playful exuberance over the low weed-covered rocks amongst which it ended.

It seemed folly not to try and get the boat round to Tubbamina, where, whatever storm might come, it would be safe. Accordingly, Hurrish pulled it down to the brink, pushed it into the water, waded after, sprang in, took to his oars and rowed rapidly out through the narrow horseshoe-shaped opening.

He had just got beyond the rocks when the storm broke. In an instant he was in the thick of it. The darkness descended like a pillar of cloud; the rain flew at his face, as a cat flies, with all its claws outstretched. The water began to bubble and boil.

Multitudes of cross currents — the confused uncertainty of the frightened crowd before it had settled itself in one direction—making the coracle curvet and prance like a skittish horse. Still Hurrish pulled steadily on. To a stranger few boats are more alarming than a coracle. The slightest sea sets it tossing like a bubble. Down it goes into the very depths of the hollows, rocking the next like a cork upon the very brim of the ridges; sea-sickness itself, if you are addicted to so lamentable an infirmity, gives way to sheer panic. Once accustomed to its ways, however, this very buoyancy gives confidence. It will ride like a duck over a sea that would swamp a more pretentious craft as readily as it would a stable bucket. Hurrish, of course, had absolute confidence in his own boat, and as far as the danger of a capsize went, would have taken it out in any gale.

So far, however, the storm had only been preluding, and had plenty of arrows still in reserve. That sudden change to the north-west, which had driven Alley from her refuge under the ledge of rocks, caught Hurrish in mid-sea, and in the very teeth. If he had had a sail he would infallibly have been capsized. Even as it was, the coracle seemed for a moment to buzz like a top, then, like a checked top, to come to a complete standstill. He set his strength to the oar, and toiled at it like a galley-slave, the bull-voiced monster roaring threats the while into his ears, and buffeting him actively over the head. It was a regular hand-to-hand duel. Whenever he gained a few yards, fresh succour seemed to come pouring in to his adversaries, and bearing down upon

him. He was one, and they were a host, with other hosts, too, behind that host. Still it seemed to himself that he was gaining; Tubbamina was certainly nearer than it had been ten minutes before. Suddenly, as ill luck—worse luck even than he knew of—would have it, there came a defection upon his own side. Above the roar and the hurly-burly he heard, or rather felt, another sound, a small one, but worse than all the rest put together. The oars were old, and, though carefully spliced and mended, were not equal to being the point of resistance between two such combatants. There was a faint crack, and looking down, he saw that one of them had given way at the splicing, a little above where it rested upon the rowlocks. With breathing-time he could have made it good, but in the teeth of such a gale it was obviously impossible.

Reluctantly he was obliged to let the coracle go about—a victory which the wind celebrated with a fresh roar, catching it broadside on, and sending a bucket or two of water to the bottom. It seemed hardly a minute before they were back again at the mouth of the saleen, but the entrance was a tougher job. One of the safest of boats in the open sea, a coracle is one of the riskiest nearing rocks, a touch which would do another no harm sufficing to carry death through its canvas sides. To any one looking on from the shore, it would probably have seemed an impossibility to get it in without impaling it upon one or other of the two points, outstretched like crabs' claws to catch it. Here, however, Hurrish's strength told. Shifting the disabled oar to windward, he brought his whole strength to bear upon the other,

resisting the onslaught of the wind and sea, which would have driven it on the rocks, and steering straight for the centre of the open. Another minute and he was inside, and in calm water.

The tide was still a long way out, so that there would be a good many hours before the sea would be at the top of the saleen. He resolved accordingly to tie the boat up, get a few hours' sleep, and be back again at the saleen at early dawn. It was a heavy job getting it emptied and dragged over the sand. With an ordinary boat of the same size it would have been impossible, but a coracle, amongst its other merits, is astonishingly light. Having got it as high as he could, and secured it additionally with a rope round the usual rock, he left it lying there, climbed the pathway, part of which was by this time washed away by the deluge, and set his face joyfully for home.

His night's adventures were not, however, ended! Half-way between the shore and the house, happening to glance a little to the left, he perceived, to his unspeakable dismay, a white object moving slowly along a little ahead of him, but apparently in the same direction. Sometimes it would stop short, then, after a few minutes' pause, move slowly on again as before. It was not a sheep, for it was too high from the ground. It was not a man, for it was too white, and, what was more appalling still, the upper portion of the figure alone was visible, the rest being either lost to sight amongst the rocks, or, more probably, non-existent. Hurrish, as we know, was saturated to the very bone and to the very marrow of his bones with superstition, and that the object before

him was anything but a Banshee, Clurigan, or "sper'rt" of some sort, did not occur to him for a moment. The perspiration broke out in great beads upon his face, and he stopped short, shaking from head to foot, his knees knocking against one another, his strength, which a few minutes ago had been proof against the worst that the sea and the storm could do, utterly failing against this new ordeal.

But that it was uttering no sound, he would have felt absolutely certain that it was the "Death sper'rt," commonly seen, he knew, by people about to die. His own great-uncle had seen one—so his mother had often told him—walking along, sobbing, and tearing its hair, and he, as every one knew, had been hanged for shooting a Galway gentleman within the year. Hurrish was not more afraid of dying than another man, but the bare idea of receiving a "warnin'" made the flesh creep upon his bones, and his hair stand on end with horror. He would rather any day have faced a thousand substantial dangers than one such bodiless one. Meanwhile, the white figure was slowly preceding him, moving apparently directly towards the cabin, from which a candle, placed in one of the windows, was throwing a ghostly tremulous gleam over the rocks. Had it been going in any other direction, Hurrish would have fled ignominiously; but going in this direction, there was nowhere else unfortunately for him to fly to. Alarm for the others began, too, to prevail; so after a minute he slowly followed, shaking like a leaf, his teeth chattering in his head, ready at any moment to turn and flee should the sper'rt show any disposition to approach him.

Suddenly it wavered, fell forward, and the next minute, to his increasing horror, it began to cry and moan, sobbing convulsively to itself—curiously human-like sobs they were—and writhing about on the ground like a creature in pain. There could be no further doubt *now*. It was the "Death sper'rt." He was a doomed man. God help Alley, and his mother, and the pore little childer! what 'ud they do without him, 't all, 't all? he wondered dismally.

He remained aloof, his eyes starting out of his head, his blood seeming to turn to water in his veins, so terrified was he. Terror itself, however, at last lent him a sort of courage—the courage to escape; and he began cautiously making the circuit of the thing sitting there, sobbing and moaning upon the ground. If he could only once get to the other side he could make a rush for the house, and bolt and bar the door against it. Then, at least, he would no longer see it, and that would be always something. He had nearly executed this ingenious manœuvre, when all at once the sper'rt seemed to perceive him, for it stretched its arms towards him, uttering, as it did so, a wild appealing cry.

It was all that was wanting to complete his agony! Too terrified now to fly, too terrified to move, he remained glued to the ground, shaking from head to foot, while the figure, finding apparently that he did not stir, began to move slowly towards him, half sobbing, and holding its hands out piteously the while.

With a hoarse cry he flung himself upon his knees before it.

"For the luv ov God! for the sake of the holy blissed Vargin, keep back wid ye!" he stammered,

his tongue cleaving to his mouth from sheer terror. "God 'tween us an' harm, what are you, 't all!"

"Hurrish! Hurrish!"

"Me God, it knows me name! For the tindher marcy of heaven keep away wid you! Don't spake to me! Be near us an' purtect us all good this night!"

"Hurrish! Hurrish! why don't you come? Hurrish, it's Alley! Don't you know Alley?"

"Alley!" He did not venture even now to approach; and it was not until she had called to him twice again, that his terror began to some degree to give way to conviction.

"The Lord ov grace! Y'aint goin' for to till me 'tis you, Alley Sheehan, out in the black dead o' night?" he said, with a sort of slow incredulity.

"Yis, Hurrish, 'tis me. Won't ye come to me? I've hurted me foot, and can't shtir."

She was white enough, poor little Alley, for any ghost! white, and torn, and wet, and wearied to death. Trembling and hardly able yet to shake off his terrors, Hurrish approached; and it was not until he was able in the dim light to perceive her face close to his own, that he began at last to believe in the reality of her presence.

"Mother ov marcies, so 'tis you, Alley darlint, sure an' sartin!" he exclaimed at last. "Divil sweep me for a gomeral if I didn't take ye for a sper'rt. Will I carry ye home? Sure, I see y' haven't the fut undher ye 't all!"

He lifted her up, without waiting for an answer, and began carrying her hurriedly towards the light. Suddenly, as the reality of her existence pressed more

and more fully upon him, he burst into a loud laugh, which rang noisily out into the darkness.

"Be the piper that played before Moses, 'tis the born fule I am, sure and sartin!" he exclaimed. "Jewel macree, but you guv me the nice fright intoirely this night! May I never ate bread, if I didn't think 'twas the Death sper'rt cum to tell me me grave was dug! Wait till the boys larn Hurrish O'Brien was frighted down on to his two bended knees by little Alley Sheehan. Begorra, I'll never hear the ind of it till I die, so I won't!" and he laughed again and again boisterously.

Alley did not echo the laugh. She was too worn out even to speak. She let herself be carried passively along, thankful to feel herself at last safe and on the way home. As they approached the cabin, however, and the light began to stream more strongly upon them, she began to bethink her of the necessity of telling him what she had seen while they were still alone.

"Hurrish, I've a word to say to ye," she said. "'Twas to luk for you I went out this night, only I missed the way and got into the wrong saleen; an' indade, an' indade I thought I'd niver git home agin, but have to lie there till mornin'." She paused a moment to recover breath. "Hurrish, I seen Maurice Brady," she said, solemnly.

Hurrish, however, did not seem to see anything alarming in the information.

"Did ye so, Alley? Thin I haven't hard sound or token ov him this long while back. I thought 'twas maybe to 'Merikee he'd gone," he said, placidly.

"No, he was there. An'—an', Hurrish,—'tind to me, Hurrish,—he had a gun wid him!"

Still Hurrish declined to be alarmed.

"'Tis the fule he is to carry one, thin," he said. "The polis 'll be takin' it from him, sure as eggs is mate, and what good will it be to him thin? Only a waste ov good money."

Alley began to lose patience. She was utterly worn out, and this difficulty of making herself understood seemed a sort of climax to her troubles.

"Sure, Hurrish, ye don't ondershtand me 't all, 't all," she said, fretfully. "Don't I tell you 'twas for to warn *yersel'* I went down to the saleen. 'Tis *you* he's carryin' it for, an' no one ilse. God forgiv' him! 'Tis yersel' he's manin' for to shoot."

"Is't shoot me? Och now, Alley dear, 'tis dramin' ye are, sure and sartin. What the mortial man would he be wantin' to shoot me for?" he replied, in tones of genuine astonishment.

"He does mane it, thin. He tould me so hisself."

"Told ye hisself! Gorra! if that don't bate Banagher! Where did he go for to tell ye sich a thing?"

"Down at th' ould abbey."

"Is it to-night?"

"No, not to-night; 'fore iver the trial cum on. He bade me tell you he'd do it."

"Ye never did, thin."

"I know. I'd ought, but somehow I—*durstn't*."

Hurrish scratched his head. They had now reached the cabin, and he had set Alley down, so that he had his hand free for that essential part of the operation of thinking. The conclusion he arrived at was that

she was too "bothered" and "flustered" to-night to be able to know clearly what she meant. Very likely she had "dramed" the whole thing; that, at any rate, seemed the readiest explanation. Having just recovered from one terror, he was not in the least disposed to entertain another one. He addressed himself accordingly to the task of soothing her.

"Well now, Alley dear, sure you'll tell me all 'bout it in the mornin'," he said, coaxingly. "Don't ye say no more 'bout guns nor nothink to-night, only into yer bed wid ye, where ye had ought to ha' been hours ago. Drink the laste sup of whisky, an' get straight in, an' cover yourself up warm wid anything ye've got. Take me big coat—'tis dry, for I left it 't home. Be aff this instant minute, an' God bless you, an' ye'll tell me all about the gun and the rist of it in the mornin'."

These various directions were of necessity whispered, for old Bridget had fallen asleep, and lay snoring in her own corner, and it was a point of considerable importance to both of them not to awaken her. Alley was too exhausted to make any further struggle. Weariness had reached a point where a sort of collapse seemed to set in. She declined the whisky, but went into her own room passively without another word. Her last thought, as she wearily pulled off her wet clothes and prepared to lie down beside little warm unconscious Katty, was that Hurrish was safe to-night, and the door shut and bolted. Nothing, thank God, could possibly happen to him between this and to-morrow morning!

CHAPTER XXV.

UPON THE VERY BRINK.

She was still sleeping the heavy sleep of utter weariness when Hurrish got up and looked out of the little window of the outside room, which faced east. It was dark night still in the cabin. The cocks and hens slept profoundly on their perches. Old Bridget's snores made a deep bass accompaniment to the lighter music proceeding from the noses of the two small boys cuddled snugly in their own private corner. Away to the east, however, a faint greenish light was rising. The wind had lowered, but still beat in angry puffs against the house, shaking it irritably, as if to ascertain whether its strength was really impaired or not, then racing off with a scampering noise as of a frightened crowd across the rocks. Having pulled on his clothes—unpleasantly wet still from the night before—Hurrish carefully opened the door, glancing back as he did so for fear of disturbing the others. Lep, who had been watching these proceedings with keen eyes, sprang up at this juncture, and ran to him, curling himself into a comma, and entreating with all a dog's irresistible eloquence to be allowed to go too. Hurrish hesitated; then, remembering that if the sea allowed of it, he should have to take out the boat, he ordered him in a whisper to go back and lie down again.

The dog obeyed, but unwillingly, giving a low whimper of dissatisfaction, which followed his master

piteously as he left the cabin. As soon as he had got outside, the rain flew at his face with recovered spite. The whole scene, as far as he could see it, was swathed in fog which seemed to envelop the darkness, which in turn swathed its edges and hid its extent. Hurrish looked up at what ought by this time to have been the sky with a grimace of disgust; then, first sitting down for a moment on the low wall to pull on his boots, which he held in his hands, he set out at a quick pace for the saleen.

The coracle was still safe, but the sea had risen enormously during the night, and was beating through the narrow entrance in huge, green curls, which shot their spray high into the air through the fog. Half an hour more, and they would be sweeping against the rocks at the end.

To attempt to row out through such a sea would have been simple insanity. Upon the other hand, to bring the coracle farther in than it was was impossible, for at this point the cliff rose in a succession of perfectly perpendicular steps, the result of the horizontal stratification of the limestone, quarried incessantly away as it was from below by the sea. In the upper part these steps were partially sheeted with loose scale-like fragments, upon which larger stones—fallen from the matrix above—lay about in loose heaps. The only thing, therefore, to be done was to fix the boat as firmly as possible, so that the waves, when they did reach it, should be unable to dislodge it. Accordingly Hurrish began hastily shovelling in sand with an old shovel which he kept for digging bait in a cleft. The tide, however, was rising fast—so fast that he felt that the time would be too short to com-

plete the operation. As soon, therefore, as there was enough sand to protect the bottom of the boat, he began hastily throwing in pieces of rock, all that he could lay hands on. There were not very many about, the steps rising, as has been said, straight out of the sands; so, having collected all that there were, he mounted the path in order to get at those above.

He was warm now with his work. There was a pleasure, too, in baffling the enemy, and, between the two sensations, his broad genial face shone with a glow which ought to have gone some way towards dispersing the fog. He had been up twice, and the second time he fancied that he heard a movement in the fog above his head, something that sounded like the stealthy approach of footsteps. Surprised by such a sound, at such an hour, he shouted to know who was there. There was no answer, however. The silence was complete, tomb-like. Concluding, therefore, that he was mistaken, he hurried to pick up a big block which lay at his feet, and turned to descend. He was in the act of doing so, when again, and this time unmistakably, he heard the sound, and turning, quick as thought, looked up into the misty vault. For an instant—only for an instant—there was the outline of a head; the outline of a gun; then a flash, and the next moment a stinging, numbing, indescribable pain right through the middle of his chest caused him to drop the stone which he had in his hands, and with a wild cry, in which pain, indignation, and bitter unspeakable astonishment all seemed to mingle, he dropped down upon the ledge where he was standing, while a sound of footsteps, first

nearer, then further, further, further, sounded overhead, finally dying away in the far-off solitary distance. The murderer had effected his escape.

And Hurrish! For a while he lay there like one stunned; knowing what had happened to him, and yet refusing to know it; fighting fiercely against the consciousness. He was dreaming! he was perhaps drunk! the fairies had bewitched him! Anything and everything seemed possible—nay, probable—save what had actually happened. That alone was the utterly and the absolutely *impossible!*

And yet through it all he knew—knew as a matter of absolute certainty—that he had "got his death." It was all over. He was as much done for as though he already lay in Tubbamina churchyard, under the sod which was always so full of camomile flowers. That good stanch frame of his, which, under ordinary circumstances, might have defied the slow decades of another fifty years, that number of hours would probably suffice for it now. The sea underneath was hardly nearer to him than that other and larger sea upon whose waters we must all one day float. Oddly enough, the idea passed through his own mind, though in another form, and he turned his head slightly so as to look in the direction where the O'Brasil lay. The action brought on a sudden rush of blood, accompanied by a pain, the agony of which seemed to tear through every nerve, sinew, and artery in his body, finally settling in a dull concentrated ache in the centre of his breast. He groaned aloud, writhing in anguish on his narrow perch, and tearing aside coat and shirt, looked down at the small round hole through the dark lips of which the blood was ebbing

fast and furiously. It *was* true then! It was *no* dream. He was hit—hit to death!

At first the look was one of mere animal agony, the joint heritage of all of us poor vertebrated brutes. After a while, however, another expression came into it—a sort of mute agonised wonder; a piteous appeal to the rulers of the mysterious, the unexplainable. It was hardly anger, for he was too puzzled, too benumbed, moreover, by fast growing weakness for that. It was rather a deep abounding sense of the mysteriousness of the thing. To believe yourself in a natural world, to find yourself in an unnatural one, to take up a fruit and to find a stone, to stretch out a hand to a friend and to receive back a dagger in your heart, faintly describes the sort of vortex of mystery into which his soul was plunged, and in which his brain seemed to swim with perplexity no less than with pain. It was so overwhelming that it seemed to do away with all thoughts of vengeance—almost with the last ineradicable clinging to life. With the sort of desperation which comes to a man sometimes in the worst crises of his fate, he simply lay down again upon his perch, and rested his head against the rock. If help came, it came; if not, it didn't! Help himself he couldn't. The slightest movement only precipitated the end. God was good, and might help him yet. So he reasoned, in fatalism quite as much as in piety.

As he lay there his brain was visited with odd fancies. Weakness painted certain things with a curious vividness. His fancy wandered away to the cabin, and to little Katty—his own black-eyed little Katty—curled up at that moment like a small tor-

toise-shell kitten in her basket, little guessing what was happening to her poor old daddy! He thought of Alley too, but less vividly. He could not direct his thoughts, but was at the mercy of what came uppermost. Everything swam and melted, and ran confusedly one into another. He fancied by moments that he was lying, not on the rocks at all, but in a little hollow scooped out of the sands a few miles further down the coast. It was dedicated to unbaptised babies whom the Church refuses to let lie in consecrated soil, but whose memory the pious feeling of the country cherishes with a peculiar tenderness. In this graveyard there was one grave, as it happened, which was not the grave of an infant. It was the grave of an unknown man, who had been washed ashore close to the spot, and been allowed to find an asylum in it. Hurrish had often stopped as he was passing to look at the grave and its nameless headstone,—to wonder, with a passing wonder, who the unknown man had been, and whether any one had been left to mourn his loss. Now, with the incoherency of weakness, he felt as if he himself were that unknown man, tossed there alone, without a friend or a pitying eye to see him die.

Hark! something was stirring! There were steps over his head. An odd shuffling noise. Was it a man or only an animal—a sheep perhaps strayed too near the bank? With a last resource of strength he lifted his head and shouted. Such a poor shout! the very ghost and wraith of his former ones. Then waited. There was no answer; shouted again, and still no answer. Then feebly, doubtingly, half-hesitatingly he uttered a word—only one word—

"Morry!" This time there *was* an answer, and over the edge immediately above him a face gazed down, the frightened face and wild vacant eyes—not of Maurice Brady, but of Thady-na-Taggart!

Hurrish saw it and beckoned. It was his last conscious act. Slight as was the movement, it was followed by a fresh and more violent rush of blood from the wound in his breast, and he fell back upon the rock fainting, unconscious.

When he came to himself he was again alone, but the bleeding had temporarily ceased. Something had been done. He could feel that a bandage or piece of rag of some sort had been applied. He called twice feebly, but there was no answer. The daylight was everywhere now. A new day had come; a new life! The clouds were still thick overhead, but the fog had all but wasted away. In every direction the daylight was shining upon grey rocks and upon a wild and storm-troubled world of waters. Everywhere over the wide face of the sea the wind was speeding home ships that longed for the sight of land. All along the whole edge of the Atlantic waves were rushing up with thunder on to shores, sandy or rocky as the case might be. Away, everywhere over the face of the country, under roofs large and small, high pitched and low pitched, people were sleeping, or waking to think of another day. Children were laughing in their beds; women beginning to bustle about; strong men rejoicing in their strength; and upon one bare ledge under the pitiless sky a strong man was fast growing weaker than an infant as the blood flowed from his veins to bedew the indifferent rocks. Was no one coming, then?

no one? no one? he wondered. Must he lie there till he died? What had become of Thady? of Alley? of every one? Did none of them know or care that he was dying there—alone?

He was consumed now with thirst, that awful thirst which adds the last horror to battle-fields. His tongue seemed to cleave to his mouth, and to be dry and hard as a piece of wood. The vast watery immensity beneath mocked him with its multitudinous rippling waves. He saw his own coracle below him, and the sight cut to the quick with a sudden start of pain. The first feeling of stupefaction, almost of resignation, had quite passed away now. The horrible restlessness of exhaustion was upon him, and he writhed in torment upon his narrow perch. His eyes, travelling in mute despair over the immense arch in front, rested upon the gulls as they dipped and soared —very perfection of ideal freedom—with a dull misery which almost amounted to hate. What had he ever done? what had his sin been, he asked himself, bitterly, that he should have been allowed to be shot like a dog, and then left to die a dog's death? It was only a minute since he was in his own little cabin, waking, safe and strong and happy. A minute? nay, but a year. Had he, in fact, ever been so? Was it not a dream and a delusion that he had ever been that man, who was safe and strong and happy? Had he not rather been lying here always—a miserable creature, a worm, with a man's capacity for suffering? A creature so ludicrously weak that he could barely clutch at the tuft of daisies springing at his side—a pitiful thing, writhing and wriggling and making a moan, but so feeble that it did not disturb the very

gulls over his head—flung out like a barrow-load of rubbish upon a ledge to die.

Poor Hurrish! he was a martyr, too, after a fashion, though he knew it not. A martyr to a not very glorious cause, one that was certainly not very much worth dying for. A martyr to a long and an ugly past—a past in which he, not having been born, had at least no share of the blame. He was dying because Hate of the Law is the birthright and the dearest possession of every native son of Ireland. He was dying because, for many a weary year, that country had been as ill-governed a morsel of earth as was to be found under the wide-seeing eye of God. The old long-repented sin of the stronger country was the culprit, as surely as if it had pointed the gun at his breast. Is that ridiculous? Perhaps so, and yet it is true too, as many ridiculous things *are* true.

Another, and perhaps an equally ridiculous, fact was, that it was only now that indignation against his assailant was really beginning to find place in his breast. Not even now, for shooting him—that, though inexplicable, was comparatively venial—but for deserting him—leaving him there on that naked ledge to die alone. If he would come back even *now*, be with him, stay beside him, let him have the comfort of seeing his face, any human face, and not only this big, dreadful, empty immensity, he felt that he could freely forgive him all the rest.

How long had he lain there? Sometimes he fancied that he had fallen over the ledge, and was tossing about in the waves below, up and down, to and fro. The sun shone upon the waves, but it did not seem to warm him. He was a cork, he was a bubble, he

was a coracle. The fancies followed one another so fast, that there was no time to recognise them before they were gone again. At last he was aroused by something that was not a fancy—something soft, yet rough, moving backwards and forwards wetly over his face. He opened his eyes, and opened them into a mass of tangled fur. It was Lep — poor, honest, faithful Lep—whining and looking piteously at his master, and evidently perfectly aware of his cruel plight. Thady was there too, his white face red with running, the perspiration pouring from it in great drops. They were not alone; others were following. Two men, fishermen from Tubbamina, who came up with frightened faces and loud ejaculations of dismay. There was no time for ejaculations, however—no time either to tell even how Thady had made them understand. The first thing was to get Hurrish home, and for this it would be necessary, they decided, to get more help and a door.

There was another inevitable delay. The nearest cabin was his own, so that it was there they went. How the news had been told there was no one to tell, but in a shorter time than would have seemed possible there came a flying sound of footsteps nearer and nearer. A pause; a low cry of anguish, as of a soul taking flight, and Alley Sheehan was upon her knees beside him, her white despairing face close to his; her great grey eyes strained and dry, with the tension of an agony too great for tears or words. Close behind her, like shadow upon light, followed old Bridget, mad with fury and athirst for revenge. Seizing the girl, she thrust her aside with a curse, telling her to keep back, and not be allays meddlin';

then flung herself almost upon her son, at the imminent risk of pushing him off his precarious resting-place.

Mechanically Alley obeyed and drew back. Is there, I wonder, any passion, any human need so great that it will not give way to habit, if only that habit has been continuous enough, more especially if it has its root in fear? Hurrish, however, had caught sight of her face, its look of desperate misery striking him through all his languor, and he beckoned to her to come back, Bridget sullenly making way for her to do so.

"Don't take on so, allanah," he whispered soothingly. "Sure 'twas to be, or it wudn't ha' been. Anyhow, ye did all ye cud, an' no one on this mortial arth cud do more."

She made no answer. She was turned to stone. The worst had come, and what did anything else matter? Let Maurice Brady come and kill her too. She would only thank him, she felt.

The men had now come back with the door, and were about to lift Hurrish on to it. Just before they did so, however, a new idea seemed to strike him, for he beckoned her over to him again.

"You see *'twas* the Death sper'rt, Alley, I seen after all!" he said, a faint gleam of humour struggling for a moment across the paleness of his face.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOME PRECURSORS OF THE MILLENNIUM.

The effect upon Tubbamina of the news of Hurrish's disaster was of the nature of a galvanic shock! —an electric current of horror, grief, dismay, fury, which seemed to rush through all its inhabitants alike. There was not a man, woman, or child who did not feel as if a personal injury had been done them; a valuable piece of property removed; a serious breach made in his or her future comfort. Who first put the general instinct into words it would be difficult to say, but within a very short time of the arrival of the news, every one, as if by inspiration, had struck upon the same name as that of the culprit. There was no question either about concealing *this* murder, or protecting its perpetrator. On the contrary, every one was athirst for vengeance, and eager to bring the offender to justice.

That distinguished upholder of the law, Mr Andy Holohun — prominent member of the Republican brotherhood, and reputed assistant at at least half-a-dozen violent outrages—was the first to suggest calling in the aid of the "polis." No sooner said than done. Three or four men—Mr Holohun himself at their head—ran off straight to the barracks, and laid the case before the sergeant in command; then turned back to concoct further plans. A party of men started off to Ballyvaughan, to intercept him if he attempted to cross in the steamer to Galway. An-

other ran up the Gortnacoppin ridge to see if by chance he might be lurking in the cabin there. All the powers of that underground government which, as most people are aware, is not without power in Ireland, were brought to bear upon the matter. The very women felt it to be absolutely incumbent upon them, as good citizens, to suspend all household operations, in order to sit together on the doorsteps and volubly curse the culprit! Never had so spontaneous an abhorrence of crime, never so magnificent a thirst after abstract justice, been exhibited before by an Irish village!

While this excitement was going on at Tubbamina a different scene was proceeding at the cabin, to which Hurrish had meantime been carefully conveyed, and laid there upon his own bed. Poor Mary O'Brien's bed! the one she had brought there with such pride, and purchased with her own hard-earned money. She had died on it, and now Hurrish's turn had come. Is there any stranger symbol, more significant of all the mingled woof and warp, good and evil, joy, sorrow, hope, agony, of our perplexing life, than that same homely and indispensable piece of furniture?

In spite of the superior interest of the search, which had retained a good many of the neighbours, there were not wanting scores of excited and vehemently sympathetic visitors to the cabin. The women arrived sobbing, and continued to wail and cry aloud all the time they remained, standing in a crowd around the bed, and suggesting every variety of contradictory remedy. Happily they were at last dispersed by the dispensary doctor, who insisted that

the patient should be left in peace, announcing, at the same time, with bluff outspokenness, that the case was, in his opinion, a hopeless one from the beginning. The bullet was not able to be extracted, though he put poor Hurrish to considerable pain in his efforts to reach it. He was not a particularly skilful practitioner, though an excellent man and an admirable judge of pigs,—a talent which naturally caused him to be much respected in the vicinity.

After he had left, a few of the sympathisers, whom he had expelled, stole back under different pleas, and amongst these Sal Connor. The poor girl's grief was most genuine, though the manner she took of showing it might have been less exuberant with advantage. The instant she came into the cabin she threw herself flat down upon the floor, throwing her overskirt over her head, flinging her two hands into the air, rocking herself vigorously to and fro, and uttering shriek after shriek, half stifled, it is true, by the stoutness of the material, but still sufficiently piercing to be decidedly painful to any sensitive tympanum.

Hurrish, disturbed by the clamour, lifted his head from the pillow, and looked with a sort of mute appeal at Alley, who thereupon stooped down, and put her arm round the girl's neck.

"Sal, darlint, you wudn't be breakin' his heart, wud ye?" she said, coaxingly. "Sure the doctor left strict ward he wasn't on no 'count to be disturbed. Prayin' is all we can do. Cum outside wid me, an' I'll tell ye all the doctor said."

Sal Connor allowed herself, rather sullenly, to be half lifted up and led outside the cabin. Once there,

however, she again broke out into fresh and more piercing screams of distress, not unmingled now with displeasure at her ejection.

"'Tis all very foine for you, Alley Sheehan! Half a nun as y'ar, an' carin' for no man yit, as ivery wan knows, no more nor the birds in th' air! But I tell ye I *lov'd* him, I *lov'd* him! Oh, my God! my God! Ochone! ochone! ochone! to think of him lyin' there, murdered and kilt before me eyes, lukin' so white, an' spakin' so wake! What 'ul I do, at all, at all? 'Tis broke me heart is, to think ov it! The toimes an' toimes I moight ha' married, an' niver wud luk at one of thim wid thinkin' ov Hurrish O'Brien! There's Mr Moriaty—him as keeps th' 'Shamrock of Irin'—if he's axed me wance, he's axed me foive times, an' wudn't be sich a born loir hisself as to go denoyin' ov it! Ochone! ochone! ochone! Oh my God, what 'ul I do, 't all? Sure me heart's broke in two! me heart's broke in two!"

Alley could only reiterate her soothing words, which, after a while, appeared to succeed, for Sal's wrath turned to expostulation.

"Arrah, let me back, an' I'll be shtill as a mouse, and niver say the word, only sit and watch him brathin'! Och, Alley Sheehan, Alley Sheehan, if ye'd the laste taste of a woman's heart in yer brist this blissed day, an' knew what lovin' a man was loike, sure ye wouldn't go for to deny me!"

To this compromise the other consented, and they went back to the cabin together. Poor Sal, however, had apparently over-estimated her own powers of composure. She sat down quietly enough for about ten minutes, after which she began to sob and

then to howl; finally, with a terrific explosion, half stifled subterraneally in her petticoats, she got up and ran out of the house, her cries growing fainter and fainter until they died away in the distance.

After this the cabin really lapsed into something like tranquillity. Hurrish seemed to have sunk into a doze, for he lay with his eyes closed and his lips parted. Old Bridget's furious lamentations and denunciations had by this time died away, and she appeared to have sunk into a sort of coma. Seated on her stool by the fire, the big iron ladle in her hand, she seemed to be muttering spells into the pot, rather than occupying herself with cooking. All the nursing and carrying out of the doctor's directions fell exclusively to Alley's share, whom Bridget now no longer interfered with, looking on with a sort of sullen indifference, as much as to say that since all hope was at an end, it did not much matter what happened, or *who* looked after him!

The children, much against their will, had been taken away by a neighbour, but had been promised by Alley to be allowed to return later. The only other person left was poor Thady-na-Taggart, whom it would have been impossible indeed to remove short of main force, so determined had he shown himself to stay. No one could accuse him, however, of making a noise! He sat on the floor, crouched close to the wall, like a sick dog, his eyes fixed immovably upon the bed. The poor fellow looked years older than he had done the day before. His innocent, witless face had a more serious and responsible expression than usual, and his cheeks were crumpled into a number of fine wrinkles, like a

badly-folded piece of linen. Lep, equally immovable, and in almost identically the same attitude, lay beside him.

Hark! A distant noise; sounding strange and incongruous in the melancholy stillness of the little interior. A monotonous "tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp," approaching over the flat rocks. Another sound, too, a dull, continuous roar,—not at all, however, like the roar of the sea,—growing louder; broken with whoops, with cries as of derision, with shouts and shrieks of rage and satisfaction. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp! on they came, a body of men stepping together, evidently with the steady uniformity of men drilled to walk in step. Behind,—like dead leaves at the heels of a storm,—a shuffling, scuffling noise of feet. The cries, whoops, groans grew nearer and nearer, though also less distinct as if intentionally muffled. Now and then, however, an irrepressible groan filled the air, followed by a prolonged hissing noise as of a crowd of geese driven along a road.

Bridget looked up from her pot with an angry, half-idiotic stare; Hurrish, too, seemed to catch the sound, for he turned his head so as to face the half-opened door. Nearer and nearer came the steps—now close at hand. A muttering, buzzing, excited sound upon the rocks outside; a rush forward; then a sudden lull, like waves driven backwards—a sound of many voices whispering eagerly together. Then the door, already ajar, was pushed wide open, and four policemen entered, two by two, and in their midst, with handcuffs on his wrists—hatless, bespattered from head to foot with the mud and filth that had been liberally flung at him ever since his

capture; his lip cut and bleeding, from a stone that had accompanied the softer, if more opprobrious, missiles; his clothes torn, and hanging about him in ribbons,—came Maurice Brady.

Every one was still as death for an instant. Then, as if the sight had broken violently through her lethargy, old Bridget sprang forward, iron ladle in hand.

With one swing of her sinewy old arms, she had pushed the policemen aside, and was standing face to face with the prisoner. The next she had clutched him by the front of his coat, and was shaking him to and fro, as a tigress shakes a man before proceeding to devour him.

"Giv him t' me! Giv him t' me! Giv him t' me!" she screamed. "Giv me up the massacreen miscray-int, till I tear him in pieces 'fore yis all! 'Tis goin' the way ov yer bruder y'ar, ye scum! Yis, y'ar, ye black-haarted bliggard! The blast of Heaven be an ye, and Hell's bells 'tind yer berryin', ye murderin' sweep of th' arth! Luk at him! Luk at him that's lyin' on that bed!—him that was betterer nor a father to ye! yis, an' a mother too, ye onnatural naggur! Hangin's too good for ye; an' if I had ye 'lone, ruin to me sowl, but I'd tear yer flesh to gr-ass wid me two ould hands, an' shmash yer skull agin the vargin arth—so I wud, ye murderin' thief ov the warld!"

It was not without some difficulty, and by the exercise of a considerable amount of physical force, that the constables in charge succeeded in rescuing their prisoner from the hands of his exasperated assailant, who assuredly would have carried out her

threats had she been free to do so; and, handcuffed as he was, Maurice Brady was of course absolutely powerless to defend himself. To his credit be it said, he retained as much composure as a man under so remarkably uncomfortable an ordeal well could. A dull flush passed over his face, and his eyes gleamed angrily; nevertheless he faced his furious old assailant with a smile of tolerably successful indifference.

Suddenly all started, and turned towards the bed. Hurrish's voice was heard speaking. At first it had been lost in the tumult; no sooner, however, was it perceived, than a deathlike silence succeeded to the clamour of tongues. Old Bridget relaxed her hold on the prisoner; her shrieks sank, and she turned eagerly towards her son. It was not to her, however, but to the constable in charge, that Hurrish was speaking.

"What's the gantleman bin doin' 't all, sargint?" he inquired, in a tone of mild curiosity.

The constable—a big stupid-looking man, with a large moustache, and a pair of goggling, greenish eyes—stared blankly.

"Isn't *he* the man that done for you? Sure I arristed him as such," he said, with a spasm of official rage, half stifled by his official collar.

"Is it Mr Brady?" Hurrish smiled pityingly. "Arrah, sargint, I wonders at you,—I do indade! Whoiver put sich a fule's notion into yer head? 'Tis a thrick they've bin an' played on ye, whoiver dun it!"

The sergeant's face was an edifying study! He stared first at Hurrish, lying upon the bed, his white

face all the whiter for its dark tangled beard and hair; then at old Bridget; then at the prisoner, as if in hopes of extracting the truth from him. The latter's face, it must be owned, did not particularly bear out the other's assertion. His lips twitched, and his hands, with all his efforts to control them, shook visibly under the handcuffs.

"An' who dun it 't all?" burst simultaneously, not from one, but a dozen pairs of lips,—the crowd, which at first had considerately stayed outside, having at this juncture pushed in, man after man, till the cabin was nearly filled.

Hurrish put his hand up to his head as if to assist his memory.

"'Twas some parties in a boat, I'm thinkin', but I can't call to moind essactly," he said, feebly. "I was cumin' alang the thrack, an' I turned t'wards th' say, an' all 'tonc't I got the crack in me brist, an' that's all I know, but I seen a little boat soon afther cumin' round foreninst the Glassen rock—a wheesy little dotteen of a thing, nigh well as shmall as me fist, so 'twas," he added, thoughtfully.

There was a general silence. Not a single being in the cabin, of course, believed a word that he had been listening to. Not one either but felt a pang of dismay and disgust at the thought that the murderer would, after all, escape. So deeply engrained, however, in Ireland, is the instinct under no circumstances to betray a criminal, that the very men who had dragged Maurice triumphantly out of his hiding-place, and had accompanied him thus far, with the amiable intention of hearing that he was safe to be hanged, felt that Hurrish's conduct was only natural,

and moreover, that, under similar circumstances, they would have done precisely the same themselves.

Oddly enough, the person who felt least inclined to let the matter rest where it was, was gentle, tender-hearted Alley. A flush of anger rose to her cheek, and she stepped impetuously forward, and opened her mouth as if to speak. Then suddenly changing her mind, she turned away, and sat silently down in a corner. Happily for Maurice Brady, it had never occurred to anybody to dream of her as a possible witness.

A sort of sudden gloom, a dull feeling of disappointment, fell upon the entire party, as upon an audience that has been promised some exciting drama which fails at the last minute to come off. The men, one by one, began to file out, leaving only the policemen and prisoner in the cabin. Even Bridget fell back, and sat down, with her former air of lethargy, beside the fire. Hurrish was the first to speak.

"I'd loike, if it's not displazing to yis, to have a word or two wid Mr Brady," he said, looking round, first at the policemen, then at his mother and Alley. "If ye'll lave us to our two selves for a while, I'd be 'bliged."

Sullenly, like one under an irresistible spell, old Bridget went out. Alley followed, avoiding looking at Maurice as she passed him. The policemen, too, moved away, the sergeant stopping as he did so to unlock the prisoner's handcuffs. They did not intend letting him out of reach entirely, in case of any fresh evidence turning up; but to keep him in custody, and to take him before a magistrate without more evidence than they had at present, was obviously impracticable.

The men who had accompanied them from Tubbamina were still outside, standing about together in groups, and gloomily exchanging suggestions and condolences. It was a moment of universal brotherhood,—wolves and sheep-dogs meeting and conversing on a sort of common ground. As far as the good wishes of the company present went, there were enough and to spare, every man being perfectly ready to swear a solemn oath that Maurice Brady, and no one else, was the criminal. But, alas! none of them had seen, or could even pretend they had seen, the deed done. Of what use, therefore, all their zeal or all their excellent intentions, when the victim and only witness absolutely declined to prosecute? As a proof of good feeling and unanimity, however, it was certainly edifying in the extreme. Indeed, to see Andy Holohun go up to the big constable, and compare notes with him in a low tone of sympathy and confidential intercourse, was a beautiful sight, calculated to make any one believe in the speedy oncoming of a universal millennium!

CHAPTER XXVII.

FACE TO FACE.

And so, and for the last time upon earth, Hurrish O'Brien and Maurice Brady were alone together face to face! What thoughts passed through their minds, what ineffaceable memories rose up before them both,

it is easier to imagine than to put into commonplace words. Their new position towards one another was so new, so appalling, so impossible; their old one so familiar, so kindly, so, as it were, inevitable,—that to Hurrish, at any rate, it seemed only natural to revert to it, and let the rest be. He waited a while, expecting Maurice to be the first to speak. Then, as he did not do so, but remained sullenly aloof, keeping as near as he could to the door, and apparently resolved not to approach, or if possible look at him, he began himself.

"What I axed ye to shtop an'—spake to me for —Morry, me buoy," he said, speaking slowly, and evidently with difficulty, "was to tell you 'bout— Mat. I thought I'd be aisier somehow if ye knew how 't was at the last. I wudn't loike for to go an' for you—'t think—I dun—what ye—thought I—dun."

Maurice Brady started, and his face changed. A hideous, an altogether intolerable thought, rushed through his brain, as the words fell slowly from the other's lips,—a thought so dreadful that it seemed to sear him from head to heel like a red-hot iron, and to leave him racked and shaking with agony. His stoicism, his pride, his bitter furious sense of humiliation, all were swept for the moment out of sight, almost out of existence, by this new shock. Did Hurrish mean—was he going to say that it was a *mistake?*—that he had *not* murdered Mat? Was he going to swear *that* to him on his deathbed? A sudden sickening horror of his own action—a horror which up till now had hardly touched him, even lightly—fell upon him suddenly, consumingly, like a

bolt. Little by little he had been pushed on by the thirst for revenge, by the unendurable sting of his own altered position, which he owed, he told himself, exclusively to Hurrish. Like many another before him, he had goaded, deafened, blinded himself into a belief in the necessity of the crime—had told himself that it was not, in fact, a crime at all, but merely the acquitting of a necessary debt;—that honour, revenge, justice—nay, the very peace of his brother's soul—demanded that he should do it, seeing that the law declined to take the matter into its own hands, as it ought to have done. He was not a murderer, therefore, but only an avenger. Suddenly, as at the touch of some dividing and disentangling rod, these arguments fled away,—burst, as a bubble bursts, leaving him there face to face with the real facts. He saw himself as he was—a murderer!—a foul, brutal, cold-blooded murderer. And the murderer of whom? Of his own best friend; of the man who, as old Bridget had truly said, had been a father to him when he needed one; had given him a home when his own was no home to him; had believed in him when nobody else believed; had made his young ambitions *his* ambitions; above all, had loved him as it is given to few men to be loved even by their own fathers. And, in return for all this, what had he, on his part, done? God of justice and of mercy!—he had murdered him!

Though slow, the retribution was complete. If ever the hideousness of a man's crime overtook him in this mortal life, it overtook Maurice Brady at that moment. He had not even—like the vast majority of criminals—that brutal dulness which blunts and

deadens the edges of self-consciousness, making remorse less an inward agony than a mere outward dread of consequences. His own hard, revengeful hands had forged the spear, and now his own quick brains drove it home—home to the very hilt. Like one gone for ever out of this life, out of hope, out of the possibility of repentance, face to face through all eternity with the unending, the ineffaceable, the unatonable, he writhed in anguish, turning his eyes to the bed and to his victim, as such a lost soul might be expected in its extremity to turn towards its accuser.

"Hurrish!—my God, Hurrish!—speak to me!" he said, in a voice so changed that few would have recognised it. "If you've any mercy or pity left, don't tell me you didn't kill him! God! if you do, I'll dash my head against that wall, and die before you yet!"

That this was no idle threat, no mere rhetorical flourish, his bloodshot eyes and changed and haggard face showed plainly. Remorse, flung suddenly like a burning coal into the lake of the soul, produces tortures the agony of which might well drive a much less sensitive man than Maurice Brady to try the last throw of all with destiny, and exchange the worst he knew for what of worse there might be yet to know.

Hurrish probably saw this, for, quite forgetting his wound, he sprang up in the bed, and stretched his hands out as if to arrest him.

"Morry! Morry! Arrah, be aisy, Morry! I kilt him!—I kilt him!" he exclaimed, vehemently.

"Thank God for that, anyhow!"

The reaction, the relief, fairly overcame him, and,

with a groan, Maurice Brady sank suddenly down on his knees, and hid his face in his hands, at the very feet of his brother's murderer.

For some minutes they remained thus, and there was silence between them. Hurrish lay back and pressed his hand to his chest, looking down at the figure beside him. Was Maurice praying? Probably he would have found it difficult to say what he was doing. His brain was in a whirl. Perplexity, anger, passionate despair, grief, plucked in a fierce beaked crowd at his breast, and almost drove him mad.

After a while Hurrish began to speak again—slowly, but with a sort of dogged resolution of getting through at any cost with what he had to say.

"Yis—I kilt him, Morry—I don't denoy it, why wud I,—now? But I didn't—mane it—not that way, any way. I was—cumin' 'long the thrack, an' he shot at me—from behind ov th' ould hermitige place, an' I was mad—an' made for him. He run, an' I—afther—an' whin I cum up I hot him—wan on th' head—only wan—an' he fell loike a shtone. An' whin I waited for him to git up agin' he—niver—did 't all. An' afther a bit I walked away—an'—sure ye know the rist."

Yes, Maurice did know the rest. He had no doubt either that what Hurrish told him was the literal truth, the precise way in which the thing had occurred. It had been all a fatality from beginning to end — a black hideous sorrow and crime-laden fatality. Further than this he could not think. A weight lay upon his head, so that he could not even look up. He dreaded above all other things having to see Hurrish's face again—that ghastly face, upon

which fast-coming death had so plainly written its signet. He saw it only too plainly without looking, —felt, indeed, that he should continue to see it always—through all his life, wherever he might be, whatever he might do, perhaps through all eternity, if there *was* any eternity. He could not move his lips to ask forgiveness. The misery, the whole fatality, seemed to him to press to the full as hardly upon himself as upon his victim;—more, seeing that he had to live, whereas Hurrish had only to die! Maurice did not ordinarily undervalue the advantages of living, but he was in a state in which all ordinary feelings ceased, and death seemed an easier thing to face than his present misery. In the end it was Hurrish, therefore, who began again to speak.

"I know you'd just take the two oyes—out ov yer head, if 't wud undo—what ye dun—Morry, dear, so ye needn't—be tellin' me," he said slowly, subduing as far as possible, for the other's sake, all signs of suffering. "Loife's a har'rd job t' us all, an' no doubt ye felt—druv; so no more—'bout it. I'm thinkin' maybe you'd be bether—out ov this—you'd be bether a dale in Amerikee. You'll have no comfort or intertainmint here 't all, I'm 'feard; stead ov which, there—so shmart an' cliver as y'ar! Trath, 'tis the Prisidint they'll be makin' ye in no toime!"

Maurice did not respond to the kindly little jest, though the words struck a chord to which his own mind inwardly responded. At present he could not look forward, however, prone as he was to that exercise — could see nothing beyond the fast coming moment, when that door would shut behind him, and Hurrish O'Brien would be left alone to die—to die

by his hand. If punishment had fallen upon him, he would probably have braved it out—might very likely have grown indifferent even to the moral side of what he had done; but as it was, the shame and humiliation of such utter, such absolute forgiveness, bowed him down to the very dust.

At last he lifted his head and showed a ghastly face, as ghastly as the dying man's own, and so they remained for a long minute looking deep into one another's eyes.

At length, in a choked voice, Maurice found words.

"Hurrish, I was mad! God knows I was mad! I wish I'd been dead and buried a hundred thousand times over before ever I fired that cursed shot! Speak to me, Hurrish! say you'll forgive me," he stammered.

Hurrish's great gaunt face lit up with a wonderful tenderness.

"Is it forgiv ye, me pore buoy," he said passionately. "An' sure wudn't I forgive ye, an' wilcome, if 'twas twist as much?"

How much more it could have been he did not stop to think; neither, in truth, did Maurice. He had risen and stood there, a haggard man, utterly unlike himself,—an image of despair, driven forth like a new Cain from before the face of his victim. He must go. Yet how *could* he go? There was nothing he could do—no possible atonement that he could make! He must simply walk away, and leave Hurrish there alone—to *die!* Suddenly he turned, and frantically—like one under some fierce constraint, driven forcibly against his will—he staggered blindly towards the door. Arrived there, he paused irre-

sistibly, and looked back—at the cabin, the familiar hearth, the brown walls, the crazy furniture, the broken tawdry bits of crockery, the pots and flyblown prints—all the poor, homely, untidy little interior. Then he glanced at the bed, and at that wonderful look of pity and forgiveness upon Hurrish's dying face—a look which seemed to flood the whole dreary, sordid poverty of the scene as with the light of another world. The next instant he had turned—he was gone! The cabin, Hurrish, everything had passed away for ever from his sight, and he was face to face with the cold open daylight, with the wide pitiless arch of sky, which seemed to be flashing its clearness into his very soul, to be proclaiming his sin to the four winds, and inviting all creation to look down upon the traitor, the murderer, going out with the brand of Cain stamped for ever and for ever upon his brow.

The little ridge was almost bare. The men, fortunately perhaps for him, had got tired of waiting, and were gone away. There was no one left except Alley Sheehan, who, seated upon the low wall with her rosary in her hands, kept her eyes fixed immovably upon the door, only waiting for him to come out, that she might return and take up her place beside Hurrish's bedside again.

When he thus appeared—driven violently, as it were, by some irresistible force from within—she instantly averted her eyes, with a rapid involuntary movement of horror, so as to avoid seeing him. Then, when he had moved a little way off, her gaze quietly reverted to the door, and she seemed to be unconscious of any other presence.

He paused, and looked at her as she sat there; moved a step, and paused again. Should he, must he go, and make no effort to speak to her? have *no* last word at all! He could not, poor wretch. He loved her still!

"Alley!" he said, imploringly.

She gave a sudden start, but did not otherwise move.

"Alley!" he said again, and now in a tone of despairing entreaty.

This time no notice except a slight shiver. Alley was absolutely impassive—her eyes fixed immovably upon the door, her face like the face of a statue. She held her beads in her hands, and was slowly passing them through her fingers, but even her lips hardly moved.

He stood still gazing at her. The iron was eating into his soul as it had not done yet. Shame, bitter, bitter humiliation, a crushing sense of utter powerlessness, were devouring him. He dared not approach her — dared not challenge her attention further than he had done. The little, humble, insignificant girl he had condescended to, had become a terrible power. She condemned him, and she scorned him. Whether she knew for certain what he had done or not, he could not of course know, but her look was enough. *Hurrish* might forgive him, but there was no forgiveness *here*.

So he remained standing and she sitting, and neither of them spoke again. At last, with a groan, Maurice Brady turned away, and, striking slowly across the ridge, turned to the left, and clambered

down the bank into the bohereen, which ran, it will be remembered, considerably below the general level of the ground. The next minute it was as if the earth had opened bodily and swallowed him up!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"FOR I ALLAYS SAID HE'D BE A GRAN' MAN."

When he had gone, and the sound of his footsteps had quite died away for the last time, Alley opened the cabin door and went in. Hurrish was lying back white and exhausted, but he opened his eyes as she entered, and turned them on her.

"He's gone, Alley?"

"Yis, he's gone."

"Did ye spake to him, 'cushla? The poor buoy's very repintint."

Alley made no answer.

"All's at an ind 'tween you an' him, I'm afeard?" Hurrish went on regretfully.

A sort of spasm crossed the girl's pale face. Her usually gentle, resigned expression left it utterly. An odd, wild, savage look, quite unlike any of her own—a survival, perhaps, from some fierce ancestor or ancestress—took its place.

"I hate him!" she said, in a low choked voice. "I wish he war dead! I cud kill him mysel'!"

Hurrish looked quite startled. "Och, Alley, Alley, dear, don't be sayin' such things!" he said. "God

be good! sure, we must all die! Alley, it frights me t' hear ye!"

She made no answer, but turned away, and began busying herself about some arrangements for his comfort. Presently old Bridget came back, and made straight for the fireplace, looking round as she did so at the bed and its occupant, as if puzzled as to its meaning. Thady-na-Taggart, who had run away when the crowd had invaded the cabin, now also stole back, with his usual slipshod, noiseless step, and went and crouched down in his former place, Lep making room for him and settling down again beside him with an air of satisfaction.

After this Hurrish lay for some time quite still and silent, his hand pressed to his chest, his face drawn and white. Presently, hearing a little movement near him, he lifted his head, and saw the three children—the two boys and Katty—who had been allowed to come back on promise of good behaviour, standing together in a small frightened group, a little way from the bed, the six round eyes fixed simultaneously in awed consternation upon his own face.

He lifted his head and beckoned to them. Katty, however, instantly shrank away and hid her face. That strange man lying upon the bed, her daddy! her startled black eyes and angry pouting mouth seemed to say—No, no! She knew better than *that!* She clutched at the rosary, which had been confided to her as a pledge for good behaviour, and held it across her face as a sort of defence, peeping at him suspiciously between the beads.

Hurrish's face lit up with its old familiar smile, or rather the ghost of it.

"Won't Kitteen giv pore dada *wan* kiss?—pore dada that's goin' away an' lavin' her!" he said coaxingly. "Trath, an' 'tis th' pore dada, sure enough, he's been to you, my dotey," he added, tenderly.

Convinced apparently by his voice, Katty approached a step nearer, her little face still puckered into a pout of suspicion. Alley lifted her, so that he could kiss her without having to stoop, and the soft round face, with its parted rose-bud lips, and the white haggard one, so piteously gaunt and drawn already, met in a long kiss.

"Ye'll kape her—wid ye—allays. An'—make her a gud gurl—like yersel', Alley?" he said, brokenly.

She bent her head over the child, the determination not to disturb him making the tears spring agonisingly to her eyes.

The two boys came forward, one after the other. Clancy had his stout brown fists in his eyes, and his two red cheeks under them showed long blistered streaks where the tears had stained them. Andy's blue eyes were wide and tearful too, but it was evident that he hardly realised what had taken place more than Katty did. He had on an old coat of his father's cut down to suit him, which gave him the quaintest grotesque likeness to Hurrish. Lep, feeling evidently that his turn too had come, ran over with a whine to the bed, and, resting his forepaws upon it, looked up into his master's face. Hurrish patted him and said a word, and, with another whine, the dog ran back to the idiot, nestling close to his side and looking appealingly up into his face, evidently for sympathy.

There was a sound from the chimney-corner, not

loud, not much louder than a whisper, but so hoarse and unnatural as to startle the little group around the bed.

"Dyin' an' lavin' me, Hurrish, me son! Dyin' an' lavin' me!" old Bridget muttered, rocking herself to and fro with a sort of dreamy misery. "Me beautiful buoy that they're all jealousin'. Judy O'Malley —an'—Deb. An' to be kilt by a Fagan chilt—that I bad him niver go nigh—dorty little spalpeens, not fit to be whitenin' the flure afther him. An' to think of their darin' to throw shtones at me beautiful buoy, that cud ha' kilt the whole ov thim—aisy—only they got him unbeknownst wid his back turned! But I'll be aven wid thim yit! I'll—I'll——" Her voice died suddenly away in harsh confused murmurs.

Hurrish glanced at Alley. "'Tis *stravagin'* she is, poor sowl," he whispered. "She's thinkin' ov wan toime I was hit wid a shtone whin I was a gossoon, an' loike to die. I doubt but 't 'ul go hard wid her!" he added, glancing pitifully over at the gaunt form, rocking itself to and fro, and the harsh vulture-like face, so haggard and piteous in its ragged setting of iron-grey hair.

Alley made a movement, as if she would have gone forward to the old woman; then she suddenly stopped short, overtaken by her habitual terrors. Almost at the same minute Father Denahy entered. He had seen the dispensary doctor, so knew what his opinion was. After a few minutes, therefore, he hurried away to prepare for the last offices of the Church, his good-natured prosaic face touching in its unaffected grief.

By the time he had returned, and this ceremony

was over, and the doctor too had been back, and had done all that was possible for the wounded man's comfort, it was night, and dark again. Candles had been lit,—a magnificent wax pair, long stored for such a purpose—which, stuck, one into an old twisted iron sconce, the other into a whisky-bottle, lit up the little room as it had probably never in its existence been lit before.

Alley stood beside the bed as she had sat or stood ever since Hurrish had been brought home, and watched, and watched, as if her very eyes had grown to his face. It seemed to her that her own life too was going away with his, drop by drop, minute by minute, until now there was hardly anything left. As the night went on, the wind sank, until the silence outside was complete. Thady-na-Taggart and Lep still lay together in a confused heap upon the floor. The children had long ago sobbed themselves to sleep,—even old Bridget had sunk into a heavy stupefied slumber, with her head against the wall. Alley's thoughts were full of strangeness. Sometimes it seemed to her as if it was all a dream: sometimes, that they were floating down one of those strange underground rivers, which disappear so often in the Burren under caverns—floating, floating slowly along, Hurrish and she together. About three o'clock in the morning, the door behind her opened softly, and Father Denahy came in, and advanced to the other side of the bed, making a sign to her as he did so to take no notice. Hurrish had grown very restless latterly, and kept tossing to and fro, flinging the blankets off, throwing his arms in the air, and talking rapidly to himself in a low excited whisper.

"Hurry thin, captin, hurry up!" they heard him mutter. "Thar they are, as I telled ye, behint of the big rock! Arrah, aisy—aisy an' you'll have 'em. Who-ooo! Be glory! but yer th' gran' shot!"

Alley went noiselessly forward and straightened the blanket, bending over him to do so. Suddenly his eyes, which had been half closed, opened widely, and he looked her full in the face.

"Is't thar y'ar shtill?" he whispered, tenderly. "Kiss me thin, alanah, for 'tis the best wife iver pore man had in this warld ye've been to me, Molly darlint!"

The poor girl's white face crimsoned agonisingly, and she drew back as if frightened. The priest, however, made her an imperative sign to do as she was told, and accordingly she bent her head down to the bed again. In the interval Hurrish seemed to have forgotten his request, for he lay looking blankly up at the ceiling. Alley was about to lift her head again; then, with a sudden irresistible impulse, she stooped, and kissed him passionately upon the forehead. Then she drew back so as to be out of range of the candles, and sat down suddenly upon a low stool.

An hour passed, and still they remained there,—Hurrish tossing upon the bed, the other two watching him silently. Now and then Alley would give him some water, or settle the blankets and coverlet. The stillness was absolute, save an occasional long-drawn sound from old Bridget, the gentler breathing of the children from the inner room, a sigh or whispered word from the sick man himself, and now and then the far-off broken mutter of the sea. Thady-na-

Taggart had awakened, and drawn himself noiselessly up from the ground, squatting like a toad, or some strange Japanese image, with his knees upon a level with his chin, his wild vacant eyes fixed, as a picture's eyes fix themselves, upon Hurrish's face. The daylight was beginning to struggle in through the small green panes of glass, making the candles look faint and wan. The sick man's life appeared to be rapidly slipping away,—so rapidly that it seemed to both the watchers that he was nearly gone. Suddenly he opened his eyes, and looked round the room with an air of surprise.

"Whar's Morry?" he asked, in a voice which sounded almost as strong as ever.

There was no answer—neither Alley nor Father Denahy knowing in the least what to say. He did not seem to require any, however.

"Auch, an' why wud he shtop?" he went on in a minute, with a sort of self-reproach. "Wid all he's —to do, an' all ov thim—wantin' an' clamorin' for him 't onct? Ye'll tell him I was—axin'—for him, —but that I knew he'd ha' cum—if he cud. An' ye'll guv him—me blessin'—pore Hurrish O'Brien's blessin',—an'—tell him I—was proud for to think ov him,—cum to what he is,—riz up here—jist a bit of a gossoon at me knee,—that nobody else—thought nothink ov. But 'tis only what—I espected, —for I—allays—said—he'd—be a—Gran'—man!"

He fell back, breathed a few short gasping breaths, and everything was over.

Father Denahy went forward after a minute's pause and closed the sightless eyes; then, kneeling down beside the bed, recited a few prayers. He

expected to hear another voice join in at the responses, but there was none, till poor Thady, springing suddenly to his feet with a cry like a dog giving tongue, broke in with some sort of strange inarticulate idiot's Latin of his own. When the priest, getting up, looked around in some surprise for Alley, he saw that she had fallen a little way from him, and was lying in a dead faint, with her face against the floor.

CONCLUSION

Is there anything more to add? A few words, perhaps. Maurice Brady got off to America, where for some time he led a rather uncomfortable life amongst his compatriots, who persisted, rightly or wrongly, in looking askance at him, and regarding him as a traitor to the national cause, and the assassin of his own best friend. In the end this unamiability proved an advantage to him, however, rather than otherwise, since, instead of wasting his energies and talents exclusively upon the comparatively barren field of politics, it caused him to carry them into the more fertile one of business. He had a small sum of money to start with, the remains of what his brother had had in bank, and this, under his shrewd and intelligent management, became the prolific parent of what promises in time to be a large fortune. He made his way, shortly after arriving in America, to San Francisco,—drawn there, perhaps, on account of its being the farthest attain-

able point from the shores of Ireland,—got a place in a large dry-goods store, where his talents and smartness were speedily appreciated; and so well did he prosper, that within the last two years he has set up a similar one on his own account at Sacramento, which, according to the report of a wandering compatriot, is fast drawing to itself the chief fashionable patronage of that important place. He is also said to be married, or about to be married, to the daughter of one of its wealthier citizens, but this last item lacks, it must be avowed, absolute confirmation.

Of our other acquaintances nothing equally brilliant is, I fear, to be recorded. Mr O'Brien is still at Donore; still carrying on a hopeless struggle with fate; still hoping against hope for some fresh turn in the hitherto inextricable dead-lock; still perpetually appealed to by Mrs O'Brien to leave the whole wretched thing in the hands of an agent, and to join her and her daughters at Brighton. Young Thomond has been appointed to a new ship, and when last I heard of him, was cruising about somewhere in the Antipodes. He is as authoritative as ever about Ireland, never failing to demonstrate convincingly to any one who will listen to him, the only method by which, in his experienced opinion, to cut the gordian knot in which its affairs have been so long, and are still to all appearances so hopelessly entangled.

As for our humbler friends, to them, as to most of us, the recurrent years have brought a mingled crop—good and ill, disappointment and satisfaction. From the day of Hurrish's death, Lep and Thady-

na-Taggart struck up a sort of antique friendship, and have rarely since been seen apart. It has never been quite clear to their numerous friends and admirers which of the two partners is the leader, but between them they manage to lead that comfortable and not undignified existence which, in Ireland, is the lot of those who throw themselves with unbounded confidence upon the benevolence of their neighbours.

Hurrish's memory is not at all forgotten at Tubbamina, where his feats of strength are still boastfully recited, and his triumph over the law and the "polis" constantly spoken of in high terms of commendation and approval. It is not, however, exclusively upon these grounds that his fame rests. Whenever any one for miles round finds the burden —whether of life or of "pittaytees"—too heavy to be borne, Hurrish O'Brien's friendly face and strong willing arms rise as a sort of meteor from the past to mock the woes of the present. Whenever any lady or gentleman is refused the trifle of assistance they request, his name is instantly, and as a rule violently, flung in the teeth of the churlish refuser. "Augh, thin, Hurrish O'Brien, dacent man, iv he were 'live, wudn't ha' lit me be putt out 'pon th' road wet an' hungry this cauld noight!"—promises, by dint of repetition, to become a local proverb. There is a sort of subtle aroma of kindliness and goodwill which is often stronger than any one single good deed that can be recorded of its possessor, and something of this sort still clings, and promises for a while longer to cling, about his homely memory.

Old Bridget did not long survive him. She con-

tinued very rambling and incoherent, and it was never quite clear to those about her whether she knew that her son was dead, or merely imagined him to be absent from home. Sometimes she was violent and difficult to manage, but for the most part she sat silently all day long over the fire upon her creepy-stool, actively engaged in stirring the pot, and equally assiduously whether there was anything in it or not. One day, while thus engaged, she suddenly fell back, the iron ladle still tenaciously clutched in her hand, was taken up rigid, and never spoke again. After her death—which occurred in the course of the month which followed her seizure—Alley Sheehan joined her sister in the convent in Galway, and, after the usual period of probation, became a nun, and is there at the present time. She is very far from unhappy —in fact, may be described as actually happy. Her gentle soul, too tremulous for a world so full of harsh surprises, finds its repose in the fulfilment of a small and very simple routine of well-defined daily duties, and its happiness in the prayers which her Church so humanely and benevolently allows to be offered up for those who have passed beyond the reach of even the tenderest hands. Little Katty—by a special permission of the mother-superior—was allowed to accompany her, and is at this moment the idol and unspeakable torment of all the sisters, but is not regarded by them as at all likely to add a fresh recruit to their numbers.

As for the two boys, they are rapidly growing up, and Andy is more than ever the "moral" of his father, and promises with years to attain to the same goodly proportions. Perhaps by the time they have come to

years of discretion, Ireland will have entered upon a new departure, though what precise form that departure will take, and whence its brightest hopes are to come, it is a little difficult, it must be owned, just now to discern. Enough perhaps that there are elements in it which have nothing, fortunately, to say to politics—of any complexion. Kindliness, faith, purity, are good spirits which may steer a boat through even as rough waters as any that it has travelled through, and bring it into safe anchorage at last. Thus far we may allow ourselves to hope; the rest must be left to—"Time, the nurse and breeder of all good."

THE END.

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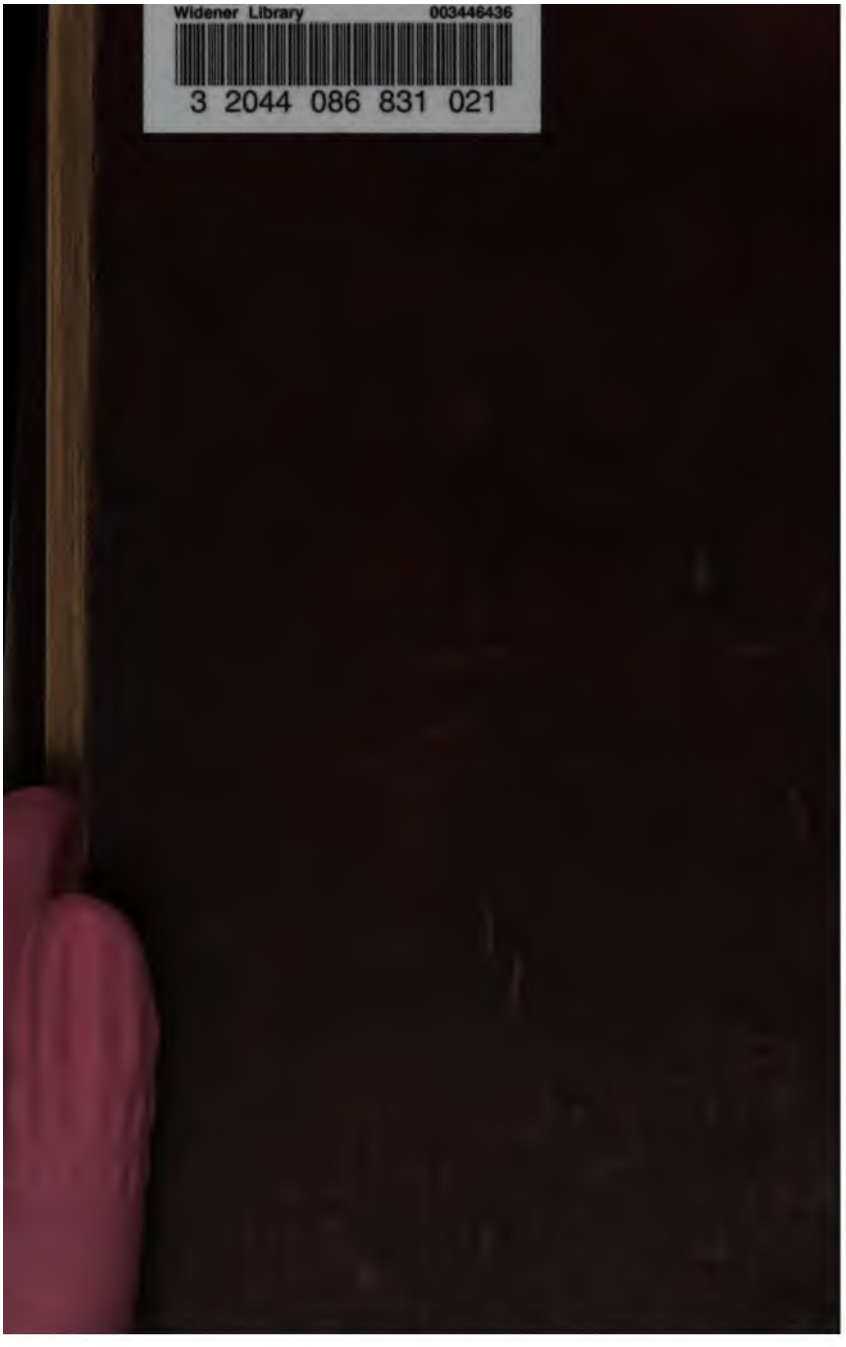
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